

An Honest Word about a Horrific Place

Mark 9: 42-50

As I studied this passage, I was reminded of the common attitude that permeates modern society. We live in an age when most believe that truth is relative, rather than absolute. Most believe in existence beyond the grave, with the majority assuming everyone will eventually wind up in heaven, or some place of euphoric bliss. While some may agree with the premise of those who have denied God, living a life of sinful rebellion, finding themselves in a place of eternal judgment, most do not believe they would ever be forced to dwell in such a place. While some may actually believe in a place called hell, they certainly are not worried about going there.

The Scriptures reveal that we are all born in sin, separated from God, and condemned because of our sin. We stand accountable for our sin, and in danger of eternity in hell. While most may believe they would never be forced to endure the horrors of hell, apart from the saving grace of Christ, all are bound for that reality. Modern philosophy may teach that we are all basically good, and as long as the good outweighs the bad, we will be accepted of God. That may be popular, but it certainly isn't biblical. The only way to escape the righteous judgment of God is to be declared righteous through the atonement of Christ.

This topic may be little discussed today, but Jesus wasn't afraid to deal with it. In fact, He preached more about hell than He did about heaven. This passage deals with the horrors of that place of eternal judgment. As we consider the [admonitions](#) of Jesus, I want to preach on the thought: [An Honest Word about a Horrific Place](#).

I. The Warning of Jesus (42-48) – As Jesus continued this conversation with the disciples, He offered a serious warning regarding hell. Consider:

A. The Declaration (42) – [And whosoever shall offend one of *these* little ones that believe in me, it is better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he were cast into the sea.](#) Just prior to revealing details about the conditions in hell, Jesus admonished the disciples about offending a little one. Keep in mind the context of this conversation. Jesus had invited a child to sit in their midst. John had just spoken about rebuking one who had cast out devils because he was not walking with them. This appears to be in relation to the previous comments. Jesus loved all who believed in Him and considered it a serious offence to offend one of these young believers. In fact, He said one would be better to have a millstone hung around their neck and cast into the sea than to be guilty of such offense. (This is quite sobering when we pause to consider it. We must be careful how we treat others, especially those who are young in the faith. We must never be guilty of discouraging them or hindering their pursuit of the Lord.)

B. The Devastation (44, 46, 48) – **Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched.** Clearly speaking of the torments of hell, Jesus repeated this exact phrase three times. He emphasized the suffering and misery of hell. It will be a place of eternal torment and devastation. The worm will never die, and the fire will never be quenched. He often spoke of a place of outer darkness where there will be weeping, wailing and gnashing of teeth. It is beyond our ability to comprehend such a place. The rich man in [Luke 16](#) found himself there, and begged for a single drop of water to bring relief to his scorching tongue. He begged for someone to warn his brothers about hell, hoping they would escape the reality of it. Hell will be a place of unimaginable pain and suffering. It will be a place of darkness, although the fire will never be extinguished.

C. The Duration (43, 45, 47) – **than...to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.** Again Jesus repeats this warning three times in the conversation. He emphatically declared that the fire will never be quenched. There will be no end to the eternal flame. There will be no reprieve from the intense suffering it brings. There will be no escape from the horrors of hell. Those who deny the shed blood of Christ and His finished work of atonement will spend eternity separated from God in this awful place of suffering and torment. [Matt.25:41, 46](#) – **Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.** ^[46] **And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal.**

II. The Wisdom of Jesus (43, 45, 47) – Here Jesus spoke of various hindrances that would prevent one from submitting to the Gospel and receiving salvation by faith. While these do not have to be interpreted literally, they certainly could and should be. Consider:

➤ [Mark 9:43](#) – **And if thy hand offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter into life maimed, than having two hands to go into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.** This may be hard to receive, but through it Jesus revealed great truth. Would it not be better to enter into eternal life, saved by grace having only one hand than to have both hands and die lost without God, forced to spend eternity in hell. If our hand prevented us from surrendering to the Lord in salvation, we would be better off to remove it than to live our lives apart from Christ and suffer the consequences of being accountable for sin. One could look at this and make application for the works of the flesh or the desires of life as well. We must not allow our fleshly pursuits and desires to prevent us from responding to the Gospel and believing in Christ. No amount of money, fame, or status is worth an eternity in hell.

➤ [Mark 9:45](#) – **And if thy foot offend thee, cut it off: it is better for thee to enter halt into life, than having two feet to be cast into hell, into the fire that never shall be quenched.** The same principle

applies here as well. One would be better off to remove a foot and live the rest of their life crippled than to have both feet and find themselves in hell. This could apply to the walk we choose in life, determined to follow the path we have chosen instead of the path God desires for our lives. Many refuse to submit unto the Lord, choosing rather to live their lives according to their own wishes. They would have been better off to have abandoned the path they chose for the path of righteousness.

➤ **Mark 9:47 – And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out: it is better for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.** The principle remains the same. If one's eye stood between them and salvation in Christ, it would be better to pluck it out than to have both eyes and die lost without Christ. This could apply to the desires of the flesh, our pride in life, or even our self-confidence. Many focus on other things rather than the Lord. They depend on their own abilities, the approval of others, and personal success. They refuse to admit or see their need for Christ.

➤ The Lord does not require that we disfigure our bodies to serve Him, but He does reveal an abiding principle. If we are to serve Him and live pleasing unto Him, we will have to remove some things from our lives. We will have to surrender our will to His. We may not be able to go to the places we use to go or fellowship with some of our old friends. We will have to come to the place that we realize our need for Christ and completely surrender to Him in salvation. Apart from His saving grace, all will face an eternity in hell.

III. The Witness for Jesus (49-50) – Having warned of the dangers of hell, Jesus closed this conversation with an admonition regarding the believer's testimony for Him. Consider:

A. The Scrutiny (49a) – **For every one shall be salted with fire, and every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.** Jesus revealed that our works would be judged before Him. Every believer will stand before the Bema seat and our lives and works will be judged. We won't face everlasting fire in hell, but our works will face the purity of judgment fire. That which was wood, hay, and stubble – works motivated by the flesh, will be consumed in judgment. The gold, silver, and precious stones will endure the judgment fire and remain. We should live our lives knowing the Lord will examine every effort we put forth. Who are we really seeking to please? What are we trying to accomplish? The truth will be revealed in judgment. **1 Cor.3:12-13 – Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; ^[13] Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.**

- **And every sacrifice shall be salted with salt.** Jesus referred to the Levitical Law. In order for sacrifices to be acceptable unto the Lord they had to be seasoned with salt. The salt served to preserve the sacrifice. Our labor for the Lord must also be seasoned with salt – the salt of grace and commitment toward Him. We cannot work within our own means, according to our own agenda and expect God to bless our efforts. We must labor in light of the righteousness of Christ, according to the Gospel of grace.

B. The Savor (50a) – **Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his saltness, wherewith will ye season it?**

Jesus knew salt was very beneficial as long as it did not lose its saltiness. Once it lost its savor, the salt lost its value and benefit. It was no longer valuable because it lost its ability to preserve and flavor. He used this illustration in reference to the disciples' testimony. They possessed the Gospel of grace. As long as they lived their lives according to the Gospel, they would be productive for the Lord. If they every lost their saltiness, they would be of little value to the cause of Christ. They were called to maintain their purity and witness before others.

- This admonition is much needed today as well. The world is very skeptical of the church. The enemy seeks to discredit the church, bringing as much reproach as he can. As followers of Christ, we are obligated to remain salty in a hostile environment. We must continue to represent the Lord through grace and compassion while maintaining the doctrines of the faith.

C. The Satisfaction (50b) – **Have salt in yourselves, and have peace one with another.** Jesus revealed the way to live pleasing unto Him and have a satisfying Christian life. We must maintain our saltiness while living peaceably with one another. Salt is beneficial, but it must be used with wisdom. Too little will fail to preserve, while too much can burn and be abrasive. We must learn and maintain a proper balance. We cannot become so liberal that we fail to present the truth and stand for righteousness. However, we must guard against the attitude of the Pharisees, using the Gospel in an abrasive or offensive way. Paul urged us to sprinkle our words with grace, while adhering to the truth. **Col.4:6 – Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man.**

Conclusion: Jesus warned of the reality of hell. On one occasion He spoke of the broad road that leads to destruction. **Matt.7:13 – Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.** We are all traveling one of these paths – the straight and narrow way that leads to eternal life or the broad road that leads to death and destruction. Which path are you currently traveling? If you are yet unsaved, I urge you to respond to the leading of the Lord in salvation. If you are a believer in Christ, I would urge you to

examine your life. Are you living in a way that honors the Lord and positively impacts others? Our lives will be judged. Only that which is done for Christ will endure the fire of judgment.