

Eternal Punishment

R. Hanko

We believe in eternal punishment, that those who do not repent of sin and believe in Jesus Christ for salvation will suffer eternal torment in the place called Hell.

Why do we believe such a terrible thing?

(1) The Bible clearly teaches it. Matthew 25:46 says, "And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal." Revelation 14:11 says, "And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever: and they have no rest day nor night."

(2) The justice of God demands it. All men are in a state of rebellion against God as is evident from this, that the vast majority of them care nothing for Him or for His Word. Nothing but eternal punishment is just retribution for such sin against the Most High God, the One who created us.

(3) The cross and death of Jesus Christ is made of none effect by a denial of eternal punishment, since there is nothing from which sinners need to be saved nor any need to save themselves if they are not on the way to Hell. Without Hell, therefore, the command of the Gospel to repent or perish is no longer true, nor is there any need or urgency to repent and believe the Gospel. Perhaps you are one of those who does not believe either in Hell or in Jesus Christ.

The Bible speaks of Hell, then, not to frighten you out of your wits, but to frighten you into your wits (II Corinthians 4:11), and to show you why you need to believe in Him.

No one fears annihilation or an after-life which is not one of everlasting suffering.

A well-known atheist once said, "There is one thing which mars all the pleasures of my life . . . I am afraid the Bible is true. If I could know for certain that death is an eternal sleep, I should be happy - my joy would be complete. But . . . if the Bible is true, I am lost forever. Every prospect is gone and I am lost forever." Do you feel that way?

But perhaps everlasting does not really mean "forever and ever."

It does. In Matthew 25:46 the same word is used to describe both the torments of the wicked in Hell and the blessedness of the righteous in heaven. If Hell and its punishment is not eternal, neither is Heaven and its bliss. No one who believes in heaven, therefore, should dare deny Hell.

Yet many do, even among those who claim to believe the Bible. What used to be characteristic of the cults is now characteristic of many Christians. For example, the New International Version, the Bible of many evangelical Christians, has completely eliminated all references to Hell from the Old Testament and nearly eliminated them from the New Testament as well. This is to be deplored, but it does not change the Bible's testimony.

We would ask therefore what you think of the Bible's teaching on this matter. Do *you* believe what God says in His Word about that awful place called Hell? If you do not, please consider that your unbelief puts you in danger of going there. To deny Hell or eternal punishment is to deny the clear teaching of the Bible. To deny the clear teaching of the Bible is to be a liar (John 2:22), and no liar shall enter the Kingdom of heaven (Revelation 21:27).