

Eternal Destruction (2)

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Is Hell A Bit Excessive?

Some argue that eternal suffering is too excessive for an act or attitude that existed in this lifetime. But we need to remember that our standard of what is “excessive” is tempered by our human perspective. It may seem a bit overkill to send someone to Hell for not helping a person in need (Matthew 25:41-46) or for disrespecting parents (Romans 1:28-32), but most people do not have as much of a moral dilemma when it is suggested that unrepentant murderers go to Hell (Revelation 21:8). Consider a few concepts about a perspective:

- Human punishment is usually imperfect and approximate, but divine judgment is absolute and precise. *“The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) May it never be! For otherwise how will God judge the world?”* (Romans 3:5-6);
- Human punishment is for reforming the criminal, but eternal punishment is not. Hell is not about social or emotional rehabilitation, but about final, lasting judgment. The time to reform is in this life (Acts 17:30, 2 Peter 3:9).
- If we have a problem with endless retribution, then we have not fully comprehended the seriousness of sin. It took no less than the sacrifice of God in the flesh to wash us of our sins, and it will take no less than Hell to pay back the wages of sin (Romans 6:23).

Is Hell Fair?

“Even the question, ‘Is it fair?’ is hardly appropriate. Christians know that the Judge of all the earth will assuredly do what is right (Genesis 18:25; Hebrews 2:2; “Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense”)” (*Through No Fault of Their Own?* p. 13). *“The eternal punishment is neither unjust nor unworthy of God, is evidenced by the unexpected appropriateness of God’s permitting the righteous and the wicked to realize their last dream, that goal to which their whole moral life tended. Is it not evidence of God’s final mercy to all that each is granted the unchangeable privilege of loving or hating Him forever, of living with Him or apart from Him forever? The impenitent continue to insist until, at last, because they will not accept what God offers, the Judgment grants them what they desired. But to their endless chagrin, they discover too late that their desires were self-destructive and horribly mistaken. So, because they shall have eternally what they desired (life apart from God), it shall be eternal punishment”* (Matthew, Fowler, p. 607). The point in all of this is that God is simply respecting the free will decisions of those who reject Him. If one wishes to live in this world without God, then he has the opportunity to live for all eternity without Him.

Not only that, but who has decided what is fair? Is it fair for any of us to go to Heaven? Certainly none of these liberal scholars would ever argue that we earn salvation, or that Heaven is fair (most of them being Calvinists, anyway). Besides, what is more fair than God giving us total, absolute control over our eternal spiritual destination? *“For we*

must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done whether good or evil” (2 Corinthians 5:10). “I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, the blessing and the curse. So choose life in order that you may live... Be loving the Lord your God, by obeying His voice, and by holding fast to Him...” (Deuteronomy 30:19-20).

Is Hell Even For You?

A concept which often goes unnoticed in the debate over Hell is that God did not even design Hell for us in the first place. *“Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels” (Matthew 25:41).* Interestingly, Hell is not Satan’s workshop or his headquarters, but it his place of eternal punishment. It was never prepared for our souls, but for the devil’s. There is something comforting there, friends: since God never intended for us to go to Hell, we can infer that his original intention was for us to go to Heaven. *“For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:8-10).* Hell was prepared for the devil, good works and Heaven were prepared for us. If that is not a positive perspective, then what is?