

The Unquenchable Fire of Hell

Text: Mark 9:42-50 (Read also Luke 16:19-31)

Introduction:

1. Christ warns the disciples against being stumbling block to little ones (children) that believe in Him.
2. Christ then looks beyond the inner circle of the disciples to the sinful world (“Woe unto the world because of offenses...” Matt. 18:7) and gives a sobering warning concerning the reality of hell fire for unrepentant sinners.
3. At the end of the discourse, Christ concludes His challenge to the disciples concerning their ultra-competitive spirit (Vs. 50).
4. For the purpose of this sermon, we will focus our attention on Christ’s message of warning concerning hell and how to be rescued from it (Vs. 43-48). “The warning (Vs. 43-48), by an easy transition, passes from the danger of ensnaring others to that of allowing oneself to be ensnared. The warning is given in a solemn threefold reiteration.” (Hiebert) Essentially the same truth is reiterated 3 times under 3 members of the body – the hand, the foot and the eye.

I. The Defilement that Sends Men to Hell (Vs. 43a, 45a, 47a)

A. The Picture of Sin

1. The Hand – represents the things we do (Vs. 43a). The hand is pictured as the stumbling block into sin. The hand itself is not evil but merely carries out the dictates of a sinful heart (Mark 7:21-23). “The hand does not act independently of the will. It is the instrument for the gratification of the evil desires of the heart.” (Hiebert)
2. The Foot – represents the places we go (Vs. 45a).
3. The Eye – represents the lusts we indulge (Vs. 47a) Goes beyond the outward actions of the hands and feet to the sins of the inner man in the heart and spirit.
4. Note: The God given functions can be used as servants of sin and Satan.

B. The Problem of Sin

1. Who has sinned?
 - a. Ecc. 7:20 “*For there is not a just man upon the earth...*”
 - b. Romans 3:9-10 “*What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise...*”
 - c. Romans 3:23 “*For all have sinned...*”
 - d. Romans 5:12 “*Wherefore as by one man, sin entered into the world...*”
2. What is sin?

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- a. 1 John 3:14 *“Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for **sin is the transgression of the law.**”*
- b. Rev. 21:8 *“But the fearful, and unbelieving...”*

II. The Description that Speaks to Men of Hell (Vs. 43c-44; 45c-46; 47c-48; 50)

A. The Definition of Hell

1. The word ‘hell’ in this passage is the Greek word ‘gehenna’ and is used 12 times in the N.T. Eleven of those usages are from the lips of Christ Himself.
2. Gehenna was a place south of Jerusalem called the valley of the son of Hinnom. In the Old Testament, it was a place of pagan worship where children were offered in fire to appease the heathen god Molech (2 Chro. 28:3; 33:6). Godly king Josiah turned the place into the city dump-heap where worm infested rubbish burned continually. It became a graphic illustration of eternal hell, a place “where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.” (Paisley; Macarthur)

B. The Description of Hell Itself

1. Hell is, eternal, unquenchable fire
 - a. The word ‘hell’ is mentioned 3 times.
 - b. The word ‘fire’ is mentioned 4 times.
 - c. Five times hell is described in these verses as an unquenchable fire. **Note:** In the NIV, they have removed Vs. 44 & 46! If you could pour all the water from all the oceans of the entire world onto the flames of hell, it wouldn’t even put it out slightly.
 - d. Lenski: “A fire that is ‘unquenchable’ is by that very fact eternal. It is useless to dispute about the kind of fire that this is...Let no man quibble about the kind of fire, let him make sure that he will escape that fire.”
 - e. Hell is called “everlasting fire”- *“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:”* (Matt. 25:41)
 - f. Hell is called “eternal fire” – *“Even as Sodom and Gomorrhah, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.”* (Jude 1:7)
 - g. Hell is called a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50)
 - h. Hell is called a lake of fire and brimstone (Rev. 19:20; 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8)
 - i. Hell is called a salting with fire (Vs. 49)

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- i. Salt is a preserving agent in Scripture. The picture is of the eternal suffering of the unrepentant. The sinner's body will not be consumed in the flames of hell, they will be tormented for all eternity. When Moses looked on the burning bush, the bush was not consumed. So, it will be with the unsaved in hell. They will be burning in the flames of God's wrath, but not consumed.
 - ii. John Gill: "The fire of divine wrath is always burning, with that fire every one of them shall be salted: that fire shall be to them, what salt is to flesh; as salt keeps flesh from putrefaction and corruption, so the fire of hell, as it will burn, torture, and distress rebellious sinners, it will preserve them in their beings; they shall not be consumed in it...these words show and prove, that the soul in torment shall never die, or lose any of its powers and faculties."
 - iii. Matthew Henry: "Coals of fire shall be scattered upon them, as salt upon meat, and brimstone, as fire and brimstone were rained on Sodom. It will be salting with burning."
 - j. Hell is a tormenting fire – Matt. 13:42 & 50 *"And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth."* Rev. 14:11 *"And the smoke of their torment ascendeth up for ever and ever:"*
 - k. Hell is a tormenting flame (Luke 16:23, 24, 28)
2. Hell is also described in Scripture as:
 - a. Everlasting destruction (2 Thess. 1:9)
 - b. Everlasting punishment (Matt. 25:46)
 - c. The mist of darkness (2 Peter 2:17)
 - d. The blackness of darkness forever (Jude 1:13)
 - e. Outer darkness (Matt. 8:12, 13, 30)
 3. Hell is further described in Luke 16:23-31
 - a. A place of torment (3 times) (Vs. 23, 24, 28)
 - b. A place of fire (Vs. 24)
 - c. A place of no mercy or relief (Vs. 24)
 - d. A place of remembrance and regret (Vs. 25)
 - e. A place of no hope of escape (Vs. 26)
 - f. A place of unanswered prayers (Vs. 27)

III. The Deliverance that Saves Men from Hell (Vs. 43b, 45b, 47b)

To escape this terrible place, there's one thing you must not do and there are two things you must do.

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You must not...

A. Rely on Good Works (Eph. 2:8-9; Titus 3:5)\

You must...

B. Repent of Sin

1. Repentance clearly implied in the passage where the sinner is exhorted to “cut off” the offending member that is the source of stumbling. The command is figurative. “As a surgeon does not hesitate to cut off a gangrenous hand to save a life, so evil and destructive practices, though precious to us as a very part of our lives, must be sacrificed to save the soul.” (Hiebert) There is to be a clear cut turning from sin to Christ.
2. “better to enter into life maimed” = ‘life’ has the definite article and therefore is a reference to eternal life. Swete: “Better to live under a sense of partial mutilation and incompleteness than to perish in the enjoyment of all one’s senses.” H.S. Paisley “It is better to enter into life and into God’s kingdom without earthly things that would hinder, than to remain in unbelief, and finally be cast into hell.”
3. Matthew Henry: “Though, by abandoning sin, we may for the present, feel ourselves as if we were halt and maimed, yet it is for life...Either sin must die, or we must die!”
4. “...except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish.” (Luke 13:3, 5)
5. Acts 3:19 **“Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;”**
6. Isaiah 55:6-7 **“Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”**

You must...

C. Receive the Saviour

1. Only Christ can save from hell (John 14:6; Acts 4:12)
2. Christ died in our place (John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; 6:23; 1. Cor. 15:3)
3. Christ rose from the dead (1 Cor. 15:4)

Conclusion:

1. Where are you going to spend eternity? Heaven or hell? Its YOUR decision. Trust Christ today.
2. Are we seeking to reach the lost and pull them out of the fire (Jude 1:23)?