

## "WHAT IS WORSE THAN THE 'FIRE' OF HELL?"

As we learned in lesson 4, hell is not merely a condition, but, rather, it is a place with a geographical location...a definite...literal...place that has **literal** fire! While Scripture teaches us that hell is a place of burning, it also teaches us that there are other aspects of hell that are even worse than its fire.

### What could be worse than fire and brimstone?

#### 1. **MEMORY CAN BE WORSE THAN FIRE!**

Luke 16:25 establishes that memory will be retained in hell...Abraham, speaking to the rich man, says, "*Son, **remember** that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, but now he (Lazarus) is comforted and thou art tormented.*"

Here, in Luke 16, Jesus tells us that those who are in hell will remember all the things that they received in their lifetime. This rich man was forced to remember that all his riches...fine clothing...rich food...life of ease and luxury...had really come from the hand of God.

Memory can be a curse or a blessing...in the case of hell, memory will be one eternal curse because those there will be always remembering and will never be able to escape from their memories.

A painting called, "**A View of Hell**", depicts General Napoleon in hell. With a look of amazement and astonishment ... mingled with dread and fear...he, looking around him, beholds...in the dim light of the flames burning around him...the awful scene of all those who had been slaughtered in battle: Little children stretching out clenched fists...mothers, with agony upon their countenances, holding up the bleeding, amputated arms and legs of their beloved little ones...wives holding the dead mangled bodies of their husbands...one woman holding the head of her husband in her arms...another woman holding the raw, bloody arm of her husband close to Napoleon's face while, at the same time, a naked body...torn with a sword plunged into its side...is lying at Napoleon's side. The sea of faces...of these children, mothers, wives...all depict rage...harrow...anger ...hate...and...infinite pain. This picture, "A View of Hell," is just that ...a view of Napoleon in hell...remembering...*looking upon...forever...the things he had done in this life.*

In Mark 9:43...which is, indeed, a very "unusual" passage of Scripture...Jesus says, "*If thy hand offend thee (or, cause thee to offend), 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*" ...verse 44 goes on to say, "*Where **their** worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*" ... and verse 48 repeats..."*Where their worm dieth not and the fire is not quenched.*" - This symbolism is taken from Jewish culture where it is said that a guilty, remorseful conscience would cleave to one's soul like maggots eating away on a putrid carcass. - Isaiah, in verse 24 of chapter 66, refers to this when he says, "*And they (the wicked) shall go forth, and look*

*upon the carcass of the men that have transgressed against Me: **for their worm shall not die**, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh."* These undying worms represent the gnawing...haunting...loath- some... "**memories**" of those in hell!

There are those in this life on earth who have troubled minds and aching hearts because of the memory of some past sin... or crime...they've committed. They know what it's like to remember the mistakes of yesterday...stealing...murder...unfaithfulness ... because these sins haunt their lives and will not leave them alone. If the memory of these kinds of things can cause such agony in **this** life, can you imagine the kind of agony ...in hell...that will be occasioned within unbelievers when they remember the many times they rejected Jesus...the many times they willfully turned their backs on Christ. They will remember the prayers of a Christian mother...the earnest exhortations of a godly father... the pleadings of Christian friends...the tears of a faithful Christian wife or husband...and, as they toss from side to side, they will cast their eyes back over the panorama of their lives and, recalling all the sermons they heard...all the warnings they did not heed...all the Scriptures they scoffed at...they will cry out, "*If only I had accepted His loving offer of salvation.*" Yes, they will twist and turn as the worms of conscience bring back again and again...throughout the ages of eternity...the memory of the many times...in this life...they refused Jesus Christ.

I cannot conceive of any worse agony than the agony of one who enters hell with the knowledge...and memory...that he is going there...by his own choice...despite the grace that was afforded him by his mother's tears...or his father's prayers.

***"Remembrance wakes, with all her busy train,  
Swells at his breast and turns the past to pain"***

Those in hell will remember, again and again, the sins they committed in their lifetime, and, oh how they will hope that these sins could be forgotten, but, rather than be forgotten, they will keep returning for all of eternity, **as worms eating away on a putrid carcass.**

Memory is no liar. Those in hell will glance back on their records and their memories will cry out, "*Look, look at the love you slighted . . . the warnings you ignored . . . the opportunities you deliberately wasted!*" ...and these memories will stick in their consciences like a dagger!

**THE PAIN OF MEMORIES CAN BE WORSE THAN PHYSICAL PAIN**

## **2. BURNING LUST CAN BE WORSE THAN FIRE!**

Revelation 22:11, referring to souls in eternity, says, "*He that is unjust, let him be unjust still, and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still, and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still, and he that is holy, let him be holy still.*" What this verse is saying is that those who are unjust and filthy in this life will continue to be unjust and filthy...for all eternity...in hell. The drunkard who craves liquor here will burn with this craving... for all eternity...in hell...those who burn with lust in this life will burn with lust...for all eternity... in hell.

Here...in this life on earth...the alcoholic can find **some** relief ...a certain amount of satisfaction...for his craving... however, in hell...for all of eternity...he will find no relief or satisfaction...for his craving because there will be no liquor in hell. Likewise, the adulterer ...who...in this life...was able to satisfy some of his lust...in hell...will be consumed with lust for all of eternity, never being able to have his passion satisfied.

Hell will be a place where the wicked will have the same *constant lust...unholy passion...* that they had in this life...but *unlike* this life, their lust...and passion...will know **no** relief ...or satisfaction.

Jesus makes this point clear when, in Luke 16:24, He says, of a rich man who went to hell, *"And he cried and said, 'Have mercy on me, and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue, for I am tormented'..."* The same desires, passions, and thirst that this rich man had on earth he now has in hell, only, now, he is unable to satisfy any of them... - *"He that is filthy, let him be filthy still."*

### 3. **THE FACT THAT THERE IS NO HOPE CAN BE WORSE THAN FIRE!**

When Jesus tells of the rich man who went to hell, He tells us that Abraham said to him, *"There is a great gulf fixed: so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence."* What Jesus is telling us is that, once one has gone to hell, all hope...of ever knowing anything other **than** hell...is gone forever!

One can stand a great deal of discomfort if he is offered some hope that...in time... his discomfort will ease...or be done away with...but...in hell...there **is** no such offer of hope...no, in hell there will not be one spark of hope...no hope...that one's discomfort...torment...will ever ease...or end!

In the city of London, in a home for those recovering from a life of prostitution, there is a picture of a little child kneeling over what had been a bonfire, blowing on a dying ember. The caption at the bottom of the picture reads: *"Perhaps there remains a spark."* It is an appropriate picture for such an institution because, despite the destitution that comes to one who has lived her life as a prostitute, there remains a spark ...which, if fanned, may even become a flame...of hope that the person can...and **will**...change her lifestyle...which means there is **"hope"** that she can know relief from...something other than...her destitution.

Hope is the rainbow against the darkest cloud. Hope rings the joy bells in the ears of those struggling under a heavy burden...hope brings music to a miserable life. However, Jesus said, **"If ye die in your sins,** where I go, ye cannot come." There is no chance for one to repent...change his life...in hell!

In the days of General William Booth, of the Salvation Army, there was a family whose members were all avowed enemies of the gospel of Jesus Christ... infidels...who would have nothing to do with God or those who believed in Him. A young Salvation Army girl...who, because she was determined to win this family to the Lord Jesus Christ, would visit them whenever she could to tell them of Christ's love, despite the fact they did not want to hear what she had to tell them...tells the story of how, one day, when one of the sons in this family lay dying, she heard the father say, *"Hold on son, hold on...you are about to die but there is nothing beyond this life. We exploded the Christian myth long ago when... having investigated all the questions and arguments relating to any possible life beyond the grave...we came to the definite, deliberate, conclusion that there is nothing but darkness ahead...so...don't be afraid... hold on, son, hold on!"* The son...between choking gasps for breath...said, in a voice of great, tragic despair, *"There is nothing to hold on to...nothing!..."* The Bible speaks of *"outer darkness, where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth"* ...a place where there is absolutely no light...absolutely no hope.

In this life we always have some hope...hope that the crisis will pass...hope that recovery from an illness will begin because, even though one's body may be eaten with cancer, there is a glimmer of hope that someday a cure for cancer will be found...or...even to die is hope for the child of God...but...in hell...there is no hope and, as the vultures of hopelessness and despair claw at the souls of those there, there is one word that will be blazed in the flames of hell, and that word is "FOREVER" ...Yes, the absence of any hope in hell is worse than its burning fires!

#### **4. SEPARATION CAN BE WORSE THAN FIRE!**

Again, to repeat the words of Jesus when:...in Luke 16:26, recounting the words of Abraham to the rich man who went to hell...He said, "They which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us that would come from thence" ...in Matthew 25:41, referring to eternity, He said, "*Depart from me ye cursed into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*"...and when, in Matthew 25:46, He said, "*And these shall go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into life eternal.*" All these verses...which are from Jesus' very Own lips ...speak of separation.

##### **A. THOSE IN HELL WILL BE SEPARATED FROM ALL JOYS AND PLEASURES.**

While, when one is on earth, he is able to enjoy earthly pleasures...such as nights of revelry...zooming professions...gigantic business enterprises...recreational fun...when one is in hell, he is separated from these earthly pleasures forever.

Jesus said to the rich man in hell, "*Remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things...but now thou art tormented.*" This man in hell had every "good thing"...pleasure...torn from him...and, leaving all these things behind him, he was never again to experience another pleasure...another joy! Here, in this life on earth, one can lose himself in a book...a movie...a place of amusement...a sport...or...one can take a sleeping pill and knock himself out for awhile... but...in hell...there will be no saloons...no shows...no drugs ...nothing to dull the senses...so...keep in mind that Satan's pleasures are only for the here and now...only for our short time on earth.

##### **B. THOSE IN HELL WILL BE SEPARATED FROM ALL THEIR CHRISTIAN LOVED ONES...AND FROM ALL THAT IS KIND AND DECENT.**

Those in hell will never hear another sermon...another gospel song...another prayer ...another church service...and they will never again see their Christian friends ...or know their influence...because they will be separated from all who are...and all that is...good, pure, and kind!

##### **C. THOSE IN HELL WILL BE SEPARATED FROM JESUS CHRIST!**

Those in hell will be separated...by a "*great gulf fixed*"...from all those in heaven who are enjoying the mansions of bliss...the gates of glory...the river of life...and, above all, the presence of Jesus Christ.

How can anyone ever adequately describe this awful place called hell? How can anyone even begin to picture the pain...the weeping...the wailing ...and the gnashing? There is no pain on earth great enough with which to compare the pain of hell...and ...if

one contemplates the agonizing, remorseful memories that will never fade...the unbridled, uncontrollable lust that will never be satisfied...the despair and hopelessness that are forever ...and the eternal separation from all that is good, clean, and pure...one **has** to come to the conclusion that hell is a terrible, horrible, place that he never wants to go to.

If one could take all the anguish of those who have ever been in a hospital...all the screams of those who have died on the battlefields of the world...all the tears of those who have ever been in a penitentiary...all the unspeakable agony of those who have ever been ravaged by disease...and all the mental torment of those who have ever been in an insane asylum...and combine...and experience...them all in one inferno of human misery...one could still not produce...and experience...the degree...and depth...of pain of those doomed to dwell in eternal hell, chained to stakes of eternal torments.

The reason that men cannot understand the reality of hell is because they have no understanding of the reality of sin... what it means to disobey...turn away from...God...and His way of living...and, instead, "obey"...and live for...self!

Be aware, however, that God does not want you...or anyone else for that matter...to go to hell because He is "*not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.*" (2 Peter 3:10). Look at what God did to save you...and whosoever...from hell ..."*God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life!*" (John 3:16).