

## Letting Hell Get in the Way

Since learning that Scripture, in the original languages, proclaims the ultimate salvation of all, I have become convinced of the importance of proclaiming this truth loudly and clearly for two reasons:

1. Proclaiming that God (who is love) is willing to endlessly torment a great number of His creation in hell is to teach falsehoods about God, and is to slander His character, and
2. Proclaiming an incorrect gospel (that includes hell) keeps many persons away from Christ, because they cannot understand how God could be willing to consign souls to an endless hell for a single wrong decision made in this short lifetime.

This past week our daughter Kari provided a perfect illustration.

I had written my book, "At the End of the Ages ... the Abolition of Hell," with the hope of presenting the truth of universal salvation in an easy to read and understand manner. I tried to avoid being too scholarly, while sharing enough of the actual biblical evidence to allow the reader to reach his own conclusion.

Our daughter Kari (age 17) had opportunity to discuss the basis of universal salvation with a co-worker. This led to several in-depth discussions as we talked over the issues and the evidence. I suggested that Kari read my book, since it touches on all of the various evidences in support of universal salvation.

Kari took my book to school, and was reading it on a break. Several of her friends approached. When asked what Kari was reading, she explained.

One girl, a Christian and the daughter of a pastor, proclaimed loudly, "But I thought you were a Christian!" I was proud of Kari, as she responded just as I have done when faced with the same criticism: "According to the Bible, exactly what is a person required to believe, or do, to become a Christian?" The girl responded that a belief in hell was a part of the list.

A young man, also in the group that had gathered, said to the girl, "Why can't you have an open mind?" This young man professes that he is an atheist, but wanted to hear more about what Kari had to say. Kari began to explain the mis-translation of the word "aionian" in Scripture, and some of the other evidences I included in the book. This self-proclaimed atheist said to Kari, "After hearing what you have to say, I think I feel differently about Christianity."

Kari said the young man seemed genuinely interested, and asked to read the book himself. Kari gave

him a copy, and she also gave a copy to another interested young man who was listening to the conversation. This second young man is now halfway through the book, and told Kari he is very interested.

Could it be that these young men, and many others like them, have simply tuned-out Christians because of the “gospel” that is being proclaimed? I strongly believe this is at least a part of the problem!

Most preachers, teachers, and Christians in general paint a very confusing picture of God. On the one hand, God is love. He commands us to love, and to forgive. How many times are we to forgive? Not seven times, but seventy times seven. When does the shepherd stop looking for that lost sheep? Not until it is found. What a wonderful God He is!

But on the other hand this same God created us in these bodies of flesh that are inherently weak. He surrounds us with temptation that lures us into sin, and then condemns us to an eternal torment in hell if we do not make a “decision for Christ” in this short lifetime.

A short life (possibly only 17-18 years), contrasted with eternal, endless torment if we fail to make the right decision.

I can understand why some people think Christians don't know what they're talking about, when they hear a “gospel” like that! Most Christians have let hell get in the way of the wonderful gospel of salvation through the Cross of Christ.

“The good news is you can get to heaven, simply by asking Jesus into your heart! The bad news is your loved ones who didn't make the right decision are spending eternity in hell, tormented forever and ever. But don't worry, God will fix things up so you don't think anything about them as you enjoy heaven.”

What kind of good news, or gospel, is that?

Praise be to God that the preachers, Bible teachers, and others proclaiming this distorted gospel don't know what they're talking about. It's clear in Scripture ... Just as in Adam all die, so also will all live in Christ!

I am proud of Kari. For a young lady only 17 years old, she is unafraid to share what she has come to understand about God with others very openly, recognizing full well that she will be criticized and condemned. But she knows the true gospel, and she understands the full love of God. Perhaps the two young men she has talked with can find their way to the Saviour of the world, now that the obstacles are being removed.

Some adults seem to think that even if universal salvation is true, they could never understand the plan of God if the scholars can't, and they must therefore rely on their pastors and teachers to be right. Unfortunately most of those in Jesus' day felt the same way, and heeded the learned and respected Pharisees instead of Jesus.

Let Kari be your example. She is 17, asks lots of questions, reads God's Word, and thinks for herself. And at her young age she has come to understand the wonderful truth God has revealed to mankind, and is not afraid to share it!

- Bob Evely -