

Trends

Scholar James Q. Wilson has stated, "The poorest Americans today live a better life than all but the richest persons a hundred years ago." The typical household defined as poor by the government has a car and air conditioning. For entertainment, the household has two color televisions, cable or satellite TV, and a DVD player. If there are children, especially boys, in the home, the family has a game system, such as an Xbox or a PlayStation. In the kitchen, the household has a refrigerator, an oven and stove, and a microwave. Other household conveniences include a clothes washer, clothes dryer, ceiling fans, a cordless phone, and a coffee maker.

- via The Heritage Foundation

Luke 12:15: "Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses."

Sentence Sermons

"It is not the man who has too little, but the man who craves more, that is poor." —Seneca

Ecclesiastes 5:10: "He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; Nor he who loves abundance, with increase. This also is vanity."

News & Notes

Pray for one another: "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much." (Jas. 5:16)

Please consider donating funds to Zach & Taya Martin. Zach is a medical student and he and his wife Taya are planning to assist Ron Halbrook on one of his preaching trips to the Philippines. The Martins are worthy of our support. You can contact Zach at: zcmartin30@gmail.com.

Please pray for one another! "comfort each other and edify one another, just as you also are doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11

Please pray for Ryan & Jennifer and the brethren of the Northern Michigan church of Christ. They are now meeting in their newly purchased building in Roscommon, Michigan.

Please keep sisters Virginia Brown and Wilma Cardwell in your prayers. Their faithfulness sets a great example and gives encouragement to all! Ditto for Al (our Barnabas!).

Pray for all the lost souls, especially those in the greater Bloomington area. Pray that Westside might be an influence for good in this community.

Pray for the all of our students: elementary, secondary and college. Our young people face many trials and temptations at school.

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Please direct questions and comments to the editor.

Words of Life

Westside church of Christ

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"Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life."

John 6:68



Does Hell Scare You?

Craig Thomas

An unpopular subject in many pulpits is the subject of hell. When's the last time you heard a sermon on it or even contemplated the concept of hell? Many "Christians" deny it's existence or deny a loving God would send anyone there. But, what does the Bible teach?

1) **Hell Is Real.** It isn't a fairy tale, myth, or state of mind. It's a real place. It's as real as heaven for they are put on an equality as their contrasting qualities are concerned. In Matthew 25:46 Jesus said, "And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." So, if heaven is real, so is hell. If hell is a myth, so is heaven. If hell is just a "state of mind," then so is heaven. If hell is only temporary, then so is heaven. Jesus said we ought to fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell (Matt. 10:28). In this we learn three things: A) Hell should be feared, B) Hell is beyond the grave, and C) The reality of hell should motivate us to live so we won't go there. Have you seriously contemplated the shocking reality of hell? If not, you need to give yourself a "reality check," for hell will be a reality for the vast majority! (Matt. 7:13-14)

2) **Hell Is Terrible.** Some believe the Bible's descriptions of hell are overstated. That's blasphemous since the person who used the word most often was the Lord Himself! The horrific nature of hell can be seen from three of its aspects. First, its name, *Gehenna*, is derived from the Valley of Hinnom near Jerusalem where idolatrous Israelites once burned their children alive as sacrifices (2 Chron. 28:3). Later this valley was used to burn Jerusalem's garbage. Dead bodies were thrown into this dump and its fires were kept burning to consume the rotting filth. Second, the Bible describes hell as a "lake of fire" (Rev. 20:10, 14, 15; 21:8). Imagine if every drop of the Great Lakes was gasoline and then set ablaze. What would it be like to be thrown into the middle? Further, hell contains "brimstone" a sticky, flammable, sulfurous compound. Imagine having a sticky, gooey, stinking, burning liquid clinging to your body! Can you image how such would intensify the pain, increase the agony, and magnify the suffering? Other passages portray hell as a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50), a flaming fire (2 Thess. 1:7-9), a baptism of fire (Matt. 3:11-12), and an unquenchable fire (Mk. 9:43). Is it any wonder then hell is characterized by "weeping," "wailing," and "gnashing of teeth"? (cf. Matt. 8:12; 13:50; 25:30). Do we need a more vivid picture? Do we want to go there? Do we want any of your loved ones or brethren to go there?

3) **Hell Is Eternal.** The above descriptions would be bad enough even if hell only lasted for a few seconds. But, the pain and suffering of hell is **eternal**. Jesus equated “hell fire” (Matt. 18:9) with “everlasting fire” (v. 8). Jesus contrasted “everlasting punishment” with “eternal life” (Matt. 25:46). Everlasting is a difficult concept to get our minds around, but be assured it is a long time! Hell is as long as heaven for the smoke of torment ascends “forever and ever” (Rev. 14:10-11). We’ll all spend eternity somewhere. Do you want to spend it in hell or in heaven?

Jesus tells us the overwhelming majority of people will go to hell (Matt. 7:13-14) contrary to God’s desire (2 Tim. 2:4). But, hell is our choice if we don’t obey the gospel and live God’s way (2 Thess. 1:7-9). Where do you plan to spend eternity?

The Letter That Kills

J.W. McGarvey

Just once in the course of his writings Paul makes the declaration that “*the letter kills, but the spirit gives life*” (2 Corinthians 3:7); and no remark that he ever made has been applied in a greater number of unlicensed ways. If a man insists upon preserving some ordinance in the very form of its original appointment, such an ordinance as baptism or the Lord’s Supper, for example, he is accused of contending for the letter that kills, while the man who makes the charge, and who changes the ordinance, claims that he is following the spirit that gives life.

All of that large class of writers who make free with the Scriptures while claiming to reverence their authority, employ this device to excuse their departures from the word of God, while those who remonstrate with them for their license are denounced as literalists, or sticklers for the letter that kills. In all these instances it seems to be claimed that if you stick close to the ordinance as Christ gave it, you will kill somebody.

The last example that attracted my attention was in connection with the number of elders that should be appointed in a church. The writer says: “It has been thought to be a greater evil to have a congregation without a plurality of elders than to have an eldership without the requisite qualifications;” and he adds: “This is to do violence to the spirit of the New Testament in an effort to be loyal to its letter.” But which, in this case, is the letter, and which is the spirit? To have a plurality of elders is certainly the letter of the New Testament; that is, it is the literal requirement; and the literal requirement also is to have elders of prescribed qualifications. Where, then, is the spirit as distinguished from the letter? Echo answers, Where? The writer was so in the habit of using this favorite expression where he wished to justify a departure from Scripture precedent that he evidently applied it in this instance from pure habit and without thought.

The watchful reader will have seen many examples of the kind. But what does Paul mean by the statement in question? We have only to glance at the connection in which it occurs to see. He says: “*God made us sufficient as ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministration of death, written and engraven in stones, came with glory, so that the children of Israel could not steadfastly look upon the face of Moses for the glory of his face, which glory was passing away; how shall not rather the ministration of the Spirit be with glory?*” Here it is perfectly clear that

by the letter that kills he means the law of Moses, which, as he had abundantly argued elsewhere, could not give life, but brought under condemnation those that were under it; and that by the Spirit he means the new covenant in Christ, which alone can give life. Men who are teachers in Israel ought to know this, and they ought to govern themselves accordingly. They ought to at once abandon the habit of perverting by misapplication this language of the apostle. (April 3, 1897)

The Silence of the Scriptures

Ryan J. Thomas

There are many in the religious world today who base the entirety of their doctrine and authority upon that which is not expressly forbidden by the Scriptures. Even in the Lord’s church, there are those who feel there must be a change in the way we approach Scripture in order to accommodate as many people as possible. God has made it clear, however, that man is not capable of making his own way (Jer. 10:23). God’s word is sufficient and supplies all we need (2 Pet. 1:3). Furthermore, He has commanded us not to add to or take away from His word. Moses taught the people, “*Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you.*” (Deut. 4:2) He states again in chapter 12 and verse 32: “*What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it.*” John put it this way: “*Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God.*” (2 John 9) At the close of the New Testament, the warning is issued one last time: “*For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.*” (Rev. 22:18) Who can read these Scriptures and not be impressed with the thundering silence of God?!

If the preceding Scriptures were not sufficient then perhaps an example or two will help to clarify this point. The Bible gives multiple examples of those who took it upon themselves to do as they wished and one such example is Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron. Apparently, they held to the notion that as long as something is not expressly forbidden it is authorized and, as a result, offered strange fire to the Lord. However, the Bible says fire from the Lord consumed them because they offered that “*which He commanded them not.*” (Lev. 10:1-2) The Lord had not said they could not use strange fire, but by specifying what kind they were to use (Lev. 16:12), He effectively banned all other types and rendered them sinful. Sadly, many today are making the same fatal mistake by adding to the commandments of the Lord. Some have added things such as hand clapping, humming, drumming, strumming, solo singers, choirs (under the guise of praise teams) to the worship service, and the list goes on. These items constitute what the Bible categorizes as “*will worship.*” Will worship is comprised of the wants and desires of men. It is self-chosen and for this reason it is a departure from the one, true faith (Col. 2:23). You see, God’s silence is every bit as authoritative as the explicit statements found in His Holy Word and should be treated with an equal amount respect and caution that we would apply to any other portion of revealed truth. Everything we do must be stamped with God’s seal of approval which simply means having book, chapter, and verse for all we teach and practice (Col. 3:17; 1 Pet.4:11). The consequences are far too severe and the stakes far too high to take these warning lightly. By the way, what is your attitude toward God’s silence? Is it a red light or a green light?