

A Letter To My Children...

If I was to write a letter to my children in the hopes that they would listen to reason and heed the important message of salvation, what would I write? How do we approach a friend or loved one about their eternal destiny when so many of them don't even believe there is a place called Hell? How do many of us even attempt to explain our past lives when living ignorantly in the world while our children were growing up only to have found the truth later when they weren't either able or even willing to understand the difference? And what about the mistakes many of us made while raising them up into adulthood only wishing to have done things differently? How can we apologize for our ignorance then, when the media today, along with so many other secularly magnetic lust-filled institutions, have stolen the true message of love from the hearts of God's creation? How do we reclaim something so precious when Satan has been so subtle in his message of confusion? Maybe you've asked yourselves some, most or all of these questions. Maybe even more. Or maybe you're one of the fortunate ones that never had to ask yourself even one of these questions. If so, you are truly blessed to live unscathed from the world and its evil influences. But to many of us, the pain of knowing the truth just tears away at our hearts when it concerns a lost loved one such as a son or daughter.

Rom 9:1 I am speaking the truth in Christ--I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit-- 2 that I have **great sorrow** and **unceasing anguish in my heart**. 3 For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, **my kinsmen according to the flesh**. (*Emp. added*)

Paul understood, as did Abraham, where putting aside his own understanding for a moment so that God would reveal Himself through His Divine plan, knowing he could once again return to reclaim his own salvation. Abraham knew that God would keep His promise that through Isaac the world would be blessed through his Seed (*Heb 11:17-19*). I personally would wish that it might be possible to be able to find somewhere, as a lawyer would, a loophole in the Gospel message where a loved one could be saved if they never committed a crime or never hurt another human being. Or where an unfaithful Christian could be saved even in the absence of being in the assembly when it was possible for them to be here. Then we must understand that truth has no agenda but to save. Because of my love for God and His salvation, I bow to His word and the unmistakable truth found therein. Yes, "the Judge of all the earth [will] do right". (*Gen 18:25*)

Joh 17:17 Sanctify them through Thy truth: Thy word is truth.

The truth is...

2Co 5:10 For all of us must appear before Christ, to be judged by Him. We will each receive what we deserve, according to everything we have done, good or bad, in our bodily life. 11 We know what it means to fear the Lord, and so we try to persuade others. God knows us completely, and I hope that in your hearts you know me as well. (*Good News Bible*)

With great pain and mental anguish I have long thought of this lesson. It didn't come easily. Many hours in prayerful consideration and agonizing contemplation were considered when putting this lesson together. And I have thought so deeply about this, to present it with a desire to remain positive when finished. Yet the pain is beyond words. Maybe ignorance really is bliss. But understanding the truth states otherwise.

Jas 4:17 So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

Heb 2:3 how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard,

1Pe 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.
14 As obedient children, do not be conformed to the passions of your former ignorance, 15 but as He Who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, 16 since it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."

To think of how often godly Christians have been berated for even mentioning the word "sin" as though we are being "holier than thou". How do we impress in the minds of our loved ones where any transgression against God is sin? And since God holds the very keys to His eternal home in Heaven, He is the One that we should **never** commit even one unlawful act against.

Sin Separates From God –*Some comments by Wayne Jackson, The Christian Courier*

When humanity chose to sin, it made the decision to be separated from the holy Creator. The prophet clearly stated: "[Y]our iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid His face from you" (Isaiah 59:2). In biblical parlance (*phraseology*), "death" generally denotes a separation of some sort. When the spirit departs the body, the body is dead (*James 2:26*). Similarly, when a person enters a state of sinfulness, he becomes spiritually dead (*Ephesians 2:1*), for, by that act, he has determined to separate himself from God. Remember, the initiation of this estrangement was not forced on us by our Maker; it is totally human responsibility.

Eph 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins 2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience-- 3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

So how do we explain the other side of that coin, that God is so merciful like no other? All He requires of us is to obey Him as a son would his father.

Eph 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ--by grace you have been saved-- 6 and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 so that in the coming ages He might show the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us **in** Christ Jesus. (*Emp. added*)

The Horror of Separation from God

How is it possible to describe the spiritual state of being banished from the presence of the supreme Being of the universe?

1Co 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

Being alienated from Jehovah is the ultimate experience of horror. It is a separation from everything that is pure and good, everything that is right and wholesome, and everything that makes for joy and tranquility. It is, however, a **spiritual** experience, and since the human mind operates on the plane of the material, we really are not prepared to appreciate the gravity of such a circumstance. Hence, God has employed appropriate symbolism to describe the agonies of hell.

The spiritual abode of the wicked is a state of pain, trouble, and sorrow (*Psalms 116:3 The snares of death encompassed me; the pangs of Sheol laid hold on me; I suffered distress and anguish.*). It is characterized by shame and contempt (*Daniel 12:2 And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.*), and is a realm of affliction (*Jonah 2:2*). Hell is a place of outer darkness where there is weeping and the gnashing of teeth (*Matthew 25:30*)—a sphere of eternal fire (*Matthew 25:41*) where the “worm” (a figure for gnawing anguish) does not die (*Mark 9:48*).

The wicked are described as being beaten with stripes (*Luke 12:47-48*). They are recipients of God’s wrath and indignation, they experience tribulation and anguish (*Romans 2:8-9 but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek, 11 For God shows no partiality.*), (*There would be if we were to judge. But, then again, our judgement would not be according to the righteousness of God.*) and they suffer punishment as a manifestation of the Lord’s vengeance (*2 Thessalonians 1:8-9*).

2Th 1:6 since indeed God considers it just to repay with affliction those who afflict you, 7 and to grant relief to you who are afflicted as well as to us, when the Lord Jesus is revealed from Heaven with His mighty angels 8 in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance on those who **do not know God** and on those who **do not obey the Gospel** of our Lord Jesus. 9 They will suffer the punishment of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His might,

10 when He comes on that day to be glorified in His saints, and to be marveled at among all who have believed, because our testimony to you was believed. (*Emp. added*)

Hell is a place of utter torment, where no rest ever is known (*Revelation 14:10-11*).

Rev 14:10 he also will drink the wine of God's wrath, poured full strength into the cup of His anger, and he will be tormented with fire and sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever, and they have no rest, day or night, these worshipers of the beast and its image, and whoever receives the mark of its name."

While it would not be an expression of responsible exegesis to literalize the figures of speech cataloged above, one must never forget that the symbolism is designed to emphasize the terror of being abandoned by God. Moreover, the figures doubtless do not do justice to the actual reality of this eternal nightmare!

- I have often tried to understand the thoughts that would go through the minds of those who, at the moment of the resurrection, would see someone they knew who was a faithful Christian, ascending to Jesus and His angels, only to, at that moment, understand that they weren't going with them. That they were to be lost and there was no way to redeem themselves. At that point it would be too late. How terrifying a thought that would be. They would be spending an eternity in agony asking themselves why they didn't listen to a loved one who tried to share the Gospel with them. Why would anyone want to risk being in that position? My kids have yet to realize that the one thing I wish they would rely on me for, more than anything else, is spiritual advice. I cannot bear the thought of them being eternally lost.

Is the Punishment Eternal in Duration?

A major objection to the doctrine of hell is its everlasting nature. Must the suffering go on without end? Is it really **just** for one to be punished forever when he or she has been devoted to evil for only a relatively brief span of time? Consider this question for a moment.

Is God **just** in granting eternal bliss to those who have served him only temporarily in this world? This writer never has heard the Lord charged with unfairness in this instance! It must be emphasized again that the issue is not one that can be determined with the subjective reasoning of biased human emotion. The Bible must supply the answer.

Judas' Example

Jesus said of Judas Iscariot that it would be better for him if he never had been born (*Mark 14:21*). If that traitor had no existence prior to his commencement as a human

being, and if he was to go out of existence at death, why would it have been better had he never been born? The Lord's statement indicates that Judas' soul, in a state of torment, would survive the death of his body.

Justice and Equitable Punishment

An added dimension to this study surely must be that of "degrees of punishment." The Scriptures teach that eternal punishment will be proportionate to what is deserved. Jesus said that in "the day of judgment" it would be "more tolerable" for those pagan cities that had received little spiritual influence than for those cities that rejected Him in spite of seeing His marvelous deeds (Matthew 11:22-24).

Mat 11:22 But I tell you, it will be more bearable on the day of judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you. 23 And you, Capernaum, will you be exalted to Heaven? You will be brought down to Hades. For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. 24 But I tell you that it will be more tolerable on the day of judgment for the land of Sodom than for you."

In one illustration, the Lord told of a certain servant who behaved himself in an unseemly fashion. When his master came and found him unprepared, he assigned him to punishment. Christ then stated:

"And that servant who knew his master's will but did not get ready or act according to his will, will receive a severe beating. 48 But the one who did not know, and did what deserved a beating, will receive a light beating. Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more." (Luke 12:47-48)

- Every Christian has been given a lot! There remains no excuse for any saint to give little in return! But because of personalities, phobias, mental abilities and other factors that make one Christian different to another, there are certain things each of us do (*or don't do*) that will determine the level of wrath or comfort we will receive in eternity.

Christ indicated that there were varying levels of responsibility when he said to Pilate: *"he who delivered Me over to you has the greater sin."* (John 19:11) The writer of Hebrews spoke of those who would receive *"sorer punishment"* (10:29), and James admonished: *"Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness."* (3:1) [This should never be an excuse not to teach, especially if one has the ability they were given by God to do so.]. Of one thing we may be certain: even in the punishment of those who are evil, the Judge of all the earth will do what is right (Genesis 18:25).

When the prophet declared that our *"iniquity"* was laid upon the Son of God, he employed a figure of speech known as metonymy (one thing is put for another)—in this case, the cause being put for the effect.

In other words, God did not put our **sins** upon Christ, but the **penalty** of our wrongs. Christ bore our “hell” twenty centuries ago. In spite of the fact, therefore, that all sinners deserve to be lost, the Lord has provided a way to “*escape the judgment of hell*” (cf. *Matthew 23:33*). No man can argue against the love of God in light of His unspeakable gift at the cross!

Wayne Jackson, The Christian Courier

There is no exact formula that would fit every situation when dealing with the many different personalities of our own children or the children of our brethren. I don't know your children intimately as you don't know mine. This lesson was never meant to be one that would give sure fire answers to such a worldwide struggle that faithful brethren have gone through for centuries, with their unfaithful children, and will go through until the Lord comes. These are questions that haunt me daily. What a terror to even contemplate for a moment the eternal torment of all the lost let alone of those we are closest to. I've always said that “*I love my kids so much I wish I never would have had them*” as Jesus said of Judas who probably hopes he never would have been born . If only I didn't have them. Maybe then there would be that many less souls to suffer an eternal Hell. Hopefully they'll realize before it's too late. Even so, without answers to this struggle there are some things we can consider as we strive to remedy this pain.

1. Live righteously so no one can honestly condemn our just lives. Our kids are the first to see how faithful we really are.
2. Be unwavering when standing up for the truth and living for God.
3. Understand the eternal nature of our own souls when making decisions that could affect our eternal destiny.
4. Love as Christ loved.
5. Be the example we would wish our children to be if the roles were reversed.
6. Attend every assembly as an example to others how Christ and His people are so important to us. Even if it means missing out on scheduled family, school and work related gatherings.
7. Remember, that our spiritual family will be with us throughout eternity whereas our physical families are but for a moment while living on earth. (*Jas 4:14 yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes.*) Hopefully, if we're so blessed, our families in the flesh will also be a part of our family in the Spirit when Jesus comes.

Joh 3:16 "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son, that whoever believes (*Gk.4100- to trust [especially one's spiritual wellbeing to Christ]*) in Him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through Him.

Jesus' purpose in coming the first time was to save man and not to condemn him. God will never send anyone to Hell; He will only honor their decisions to not love Him. So if I was to write a letter to my children, I would remind them...

#1. You've heard!

Eph 1:13 In Him you also, when **you heard the word of truth**, the Gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, *(Emp. added)*

#2. You once believed!

1Th 2:13 And we also thank God constantly for this, that when you **received** the word of God, which you **heard** from us, you **accepted** it not as the word of men but as what it really is, the word of God, which is at work in you **believers**. *(Emp. added)*

#3. You also repented then!

Luk 13:3 No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all likewise perish.

Rom 3:10 as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

#4. You acknowledged Christ as the Son of God, Who alone could save you!

Mat 10:32 Whosoever therefore shall confess Me before men, him will I confess also before My Father which is in Heaven.

#5. You even had your sins washed away when you were baptized!

1Pe 3:21 Baptism, which corresponds to this, now saves you, not as a removal of dirt from the body but as an appeal to God for a good conscience, through the resurrection of Jesus Christ,

#6. You did all those things but you didn't remain faithful?

Romans 6:4 "...we too might walk in newness of life."

#7. Because you didn't grow...

2Pe 3:18 But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

So, to my children: I will always love you even if means dying for you. But very sadly, the day will come when I will forget about you unless you are with me in eternity.

Rev 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."

Love always, Dad

Rev 22:17 The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come." And let the one who hears say, "Come."
And let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life
without price.

Rev 22:20 He who testifies to these things says, "Surely I am coming soon." Amen.
Come, Lord Jesus!

Charli Yana

1/22/24

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