

## **“What in the Hell?”**

the Bible’s teaching on eternal punishment

Question & Answer Sunday

April 2, 2017



### **1. Where did Jesus go after He died?**

This question seems to be prompted by a statement in the Apostle’s Creed. Although this creed was developed over 100 years after the time of the Apostles, it still reflects the basic teachings of the Apostles. That being said, the statement that says of Jesus, “He descended into hell,” has created much debate through the years. I think the best way to answer this question is to ask at least three qualifying questions.

#### *a. What do we mean by hell?*

If we are referring to hell as the place of torment and punishment, then Jesus certainly didn’t go there. This is a serious issue as there are many in the prosperity gospel and word of faith movements that teach that Jesus literally went to hell and had demons and Satan jumping up and down on His back, poking Him, and tormenting Him. They say that He paid for our sins in hell and was born-again there. The problem is that there is nothing in the Scripture that speaks to that.

Jesus didn’t need to be born-again because He was the sinless Son of God. Satan and his demons do NOT rule over hell as tormentors. Instead, they will be the ones who are tormented and punished in hell (Matt. 25:41).

Jesus did not pay for our sins in hell, He paid for our sins on the cross. He experienced the pain and separation of hell, but that experience was on the cross. It is through His shed blood on the cross that redemption and forgiveness of sin comes (Eph. 1:7). Eternal Redemption was not secured by the blood of goat s and calves, but through His own blood (Heb. 9:12). Jesus words on the cross, “It is finished” (John 19:30) indicated the work for salvation had been accomplished on the cross not in hell.

If we are referring to hell as a generic word for the grave, using it in the same manner that sheol was used in the Old Testament to refer to the place of the dead, the grave, then the answer is Jesus went to grave.

#### *b. What was His purpose in going there?*

1 Peter. 3:18-20 is the passage often used to support the idea that Jesus went to hell. However, as we approach this passage, we need to throw out a few

caveats. The first is that one theologian-scholar, has counted about 180 possible interpretations of this passage. This is problematic as the Lord had one intended meaning when He wrote the Scriptures. So, that means that at least 179 of those interpretations are wrong. Or, it means that all of them are wrong and no one has offered the correct interpretation yet.

Similar to this first caveat, Martin Luther, the great reformer, spoke of the difficulty of this passage: *“A wonderful text is this, and a more obscure passage perhaps than any other in the New Testament, so that I do not know for a certainty just what Peter means.”* (Commentary on the Epistles of Peter and Jude, Kregel Publications, p. 168) So, if we think that we can nail down a rock solid answer, we might be fooling ourselves. But let us not despair over this, because there are principles we can apply to this passage to provide a framework for understanding this passage.

The text says, *“For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison...”*

As we seek to understand the Bible we need to remember that context determines the meanings of words. The context also develops the big idea or main argument of the passage. We need to be careful about looking at particular words or sentences to determine their meaning before looking at the context in which those words and sentences appear. So, let's establish the context of 1 Peter 3:18-20.

Look at verse 8 and 9. Peter encourages unity, sympathy, and brotherly love, tenderness, and humility. He exhorts his readers to refrain from repaying evil with evil. In verse 11, he tells them to turn away from evil and do good, seek peace and pursue it. Then in verse 14, he speaks of suffering for the sake of righteousness. Verses 18-19 appear in this context where Peter talks about suffering that believes experience. This idea runs down through chapter 4. In verse one of chapter four, Peter says, *“Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking...”*

So, the big idea of this passage is not, “where did Jesus go between the cross and His resurrection?” The big idea is the suffering that Christians experience. In this context of suffering, Peter uses two examples of those who suffered. The first is Jesus, the second is Noah. Verse 18 says, *“For Christ also suffered...”* After establishing the idea of suffering, Peter tells us Christ suffered too. Jesus' suffering was *“once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God...”* Christians do not suffer the same way Christ did for the sins of the world, but the reality is that Christ suffered. He is an example to us of one who suffered.

The problem or confusion with this passage lies in understanding the details of the illustration of Christ's suffering. Peter mentions the following details in His example of Christ: He was *"put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit, in which he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison..."* We understand put to death in the flesh, but what does made alive in the spirit mean? What does it mean that he went and proclaimed to the spirits in prison? This raises more questions.

Again, people point to this passage to say that Jesus went to hell because it says He went and preached to the spirits in prison. They assume the spirits in prison are in hell and therefore, Jesus went to hell and preached to them. Then a question focuses on the identity of the spirits. Are they people? Or evil spirits? There are a lot of different directions one can go with this passage.

The word spirits can mean spirits or sometimes people. But most of the time the word is a reference to spirits. Who are the spirits that Jesus spoke to? And when did He speak to them? Was it between the cross and the resurrection? Or was it after the resurrection? Depending upon which of the 180 interpretations of this passage you choose, your conclusion will be different.

Now, just for clarification, we need to be careful that our conclusion is not that Jesus went to hell and paid for our sins in hell. As we already cited above, Jesus' death on the cross was the payment for sin. If we erroneously believe He paid for our sins in hell and not on the cross, we do damage to the cross and would in fact be guilty of believing another Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). Paul was emphatic in his description of the Gospel that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, he was buried, and he rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Cor. 15:1-4). He does not indicate that Jesus' going to hell to pay for sins is included.

Ephesians 4:9 is another Scripture used to defend the idea that Christ descended into hell. This verse states that Christ descended into the lower regions. Some have used this to mean that He went to hell. But it probably refers more to His incarnation and the reality that He came to earth, which is a lower region from heaven.

But to really get to the heart of this issue, we need to understand the need to interpret Scripture with Scripture. This is a basic principle of biblical interpretation. In other words, to understand the passage of 1 Peter 3:18-120, we need to understand what other Scriptures might say about this event. This leads to a third question of inquiry: where did Jesus say He was going after His death?

c. *Where did Jesus say He was going?*

Luke 23:43, records a statement that Christ made on the cross. He told the dying thief next to him, "...today, you will be with me in paradise." That of course takes us to another question, "where is paradise?"

There are some theologians who believe in a two-compartment theory. Hades, the realm of the dead, had two compartments: one side was hell the place of torment, the other side was a place of peace called paradise or Abraham's bosom. This is derived from Luke 16:19-31 where Jesus speaks of the Rich Man and Lazarus. This theory might have some merit, but one of the challenges is that the word *paradise* is not found in Luke 16. In fact, the word *paradise* only appears three times in the Scripture. It appears in Luke 23:43; 2 Cor. 12:3 and Rev. 2:7. Let's take a look those.

We already looked at Luke 23:43 where Jesus told the thief, "today you'll be with me in paradise." But the Apostle also speaks of paradise in 2 Corinthians 12. Look at what he says,

*"2 I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the **third heaven**—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows. 3 And I know that this man was caught up into **paradise**—whether in the body or out of the body I do not know, God knows— 4 and he heard things that cannot be told, which man may not utter."*

Now, this might warrant a preaching series on heaven but Paul seems to indicate three heavens with reference here to the "third heaven." According the Scriptures, it seems the first heaven would be the atmosphere that includes the expanse above the earth, the clouds/sky (Isa. 55:9-10; Ps. 147:8). The second heaven could be called space and the universe (Gen. 1:14, 16-17). Then there is the heaven described as the abode of God (1 Kings 8:27; Ps. 33:13-14). It seems that Paul is describing this third heaven in 2 Corinthians 12.

Paul equates this third heaven with paradise as he describes "this man" who was caught up into the third heaven and then says he was caught up into paradise. So, we need to bring this back to our question of where did Jesus go between the cross and the resurrection? Jesus said He would be in paradise, Paul equates paradise with the third heaven. Is this third heaven located in hell

Then you look at Revelation 2:7 - *"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who conquers I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."* The point of looking at this verse is to demonstrate the third use of the word *paradise* in the New Testament. Paradise is described here as belonging to God. So, when Jesus said He was going to paradise, He was going to be with His Father.

But there's one more verse we need to look at as we answer the question, "where did Jesus say He was going?" Luke 23:46 records Jesus' final words on the cross. He said, "...Father, into your hands I commit my spirit!" After saying those words, Jesus breathed His last. As Jesus was dying, He committed his spirit into His Father's hands. So, where did the Father take Jesus' spirit?

There's more that could be discussed and debated on this, but we need to allow the Scripture to speak and the Scripture to interpret Scripture. The Bible will not contradict itself. If there is a seeming contradiction in the Scriptures, the problem is not the Bible. The problem is our understanding.

**2. Wasn't Satan the first one to sin, before Adam & Eve? Because he was cast out of heaven.**

Yes, Satan was the first one to sin. Satan is an angelic being created by God and as a creature, he is not equal with God. He not only sinned against God, but also raised up a rebellion amongst other angels to oppose God. He and the fallen angels, commonly called demons, now seek to disrupt God's plan, God's purposes, and God's people. (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:12-18; 1 Pet. 5:8)

Satan was the first to fall in the angelic/spiritual realm but Adam was the first to fall in the physical world of earth. Satan tempted Adam and Eve to follow their own way instead of God's way. As a result of Adam's disobedience, sin entered into the physical world (Gen 3:1-7; Rom. 5:12-19; 1 Cor. 15:21-22). Because of Adam's sin, we have inherited our sinful condition and separation from God (Rom. 3:23; 6:23; Eph. 2:1-3).

**3. Did the rebellion of Satan end the freewill of angelic beings? Can angels still rebel?**

There are two categories of angels in the Scriptures with regards to their moral character. One group is referred to by Jesus as "holy angels" (Mark 8:38) and by the Apostle Paul as "elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21). The second group is referred to as evil or unclean spirits (Luke 8:2; 11:24) and are numbered with Satan as his angels (Matt. 25:41).

The fact that the holy angels are described as "elect" indicates that God has protected them from future rebellion. The fact that God is keeping many of the unholy angels in chains until the judgment of the great day (2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6) seems to indicate their doom is sure and there is no chance of redemption for them.

For more information, I've included a link to a great article on the doctrine of angels. <https://bible.org/article/angelology-doctrine-angels>

#### 4. Is there a literal fire in hell or is it metaphorical?

Let's start by reviewing the list of Scriptures below that speak of the fire of hell. It is described as an unquenchable fire (Isa. 66:24; Matt. 3:12; Mark 9:43, 48); an eternal fire (Matt. 18:8; 25:41); a furnace of fire (Matt. 13:42, 50); fire and brimstone or sulfur (Rev. 14:10-11); a lake of fire (Rev. 20:14-15); and an eternal fire (Jude 7). But the question is related to whether the fire describe is real fire that can burn or figurative language that describes the punishment.

Let's also consider what Spurgeon said about the fires of hell. **C.H. Spurgeon said:**

*"Now, do not begin telling me that that is metaphorical fire: who cares for that? If a man were to threaten to give me a metaphorical blow on the head, I should care very little about it; he would be welcome to give me as many as he pleased. And what say the wicked? 'We do not care about metaphorical fires.' But they are real, sir—yes, as real as yourself. There is a real fire in hell, as truly as you have now a real body—a fire exactly like that which we have on earth in everything except this—that it will not consume, though it will torture you. You have seen the asbestos lying in the fire red hot, but when you take it out it is unconsumed. So your body will be prepared by God in such a way that it will burn for ever without being consumed; it will lie, not as you consider, in metaphorical fire, but in actual flame." - The Resurrection of the Dead, in *The New Park Street Pulpit**

That's what Spurgeon said, but Spurgeon is not God, nor is he the Scripture. He was a godly man who knew God's Word and God used him in a great way. But we hope that what Spurgeon said reflects accurately what God's Word said. I believe it does. To illustrate this, let's look at Jesus' Parable of the Weeds in Matthew 13.

The Parable of the Weeds was spoken by Jesus in Matthew 13:24-30. It tells an earthly story of a man who sowed good seed in his field. Then his enemy comes and sowed weeds among the wheat. When the plants came up the weeds came up too. The man's servants asked if they should go and pull the weeds out. The man tells them to let them both grow till harvest. At the harvest, they will gather the weeds first and burn them.

Some parables pose challenges to our understanding when they are not explained in the passage. However, in this passage, the disciples ask Jesus what His story meant and Jesus tells them. Jesus Himself offers the interpretation of the passage in verses 36-43. In His explanation, Jesus identifies

what every part of the story meant in real terms. There is a direct translation of each item in the parable as follows:

man who sows the seed = Son of Man  
field = world  
good seeds = sons of the kingdom  
weeds = sons of evil one  
enemy = devil  
harvest = end of age  
reapers = angels  
burned = ???

The only item in the story that does not get interpreted is the burning of the weeds in verse 30. He doesn't tell us that the burning isn't a burning. He doesn't tell us that the fire isn't a fire. Everything else in the story is translated into a real world reality. But the burning does not get translated in this way. The fire is the fire. In fact, Jesus provides more explanation of the burn than is provided in the parable:

*"The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, 42 and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear."*

So, in the real world reality that Jesus describes, He says the law-breakers and causes of sin will be thrown into the fiery furnace. This is not metaphor. This explanation of the parable. He then describes that this furnace will include weeping and gnashing of teeth. This is a hard saying. But based on Jesus' teaching of the Parable of the Weeds, He seems to indicate the fire is literal.

William E. Evans says this, "Is the fire spoken of literal fire? It is an accepted law of language that a figure of speech is less intense than the reality. If 'fire' is merely a figurative expression, it must stand for some great reality, and if the reality is more intense than the figure, what an awful thing the punishment symbolized by fire must be." - *The Great Doctrines of the Bible, Moody.*

So, even if we are wrong about the fire being literal and instead it is metaphorical, and if Evans is right that the reality is worse than the metaphorical description, in either case, I don't want to go there and I don't want my loved ones to go there.

- 5. How do you respond to someone who says “I don’t see how torment could be eternal? I mean, at some point you’re burnt up and you can’t be burnt anymore.**

First, I would point them to the verses looked at previously that speak of eternal fire, unquenchable fire, and everlasting punishment. I believe Matthew 25:46 address this question too. It says, “And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” Notice that the life of the righteous is described as eternal and the punishment of the wicked is described as eternal. The word eternal is the same word for both. How is it possible to interpret the same word in the same sentence as meaning forever for describing life but not forever when describing punishment? — We must conform our thinking to what the Scripture says instead of conforming the Scripture to our thinking.

Second, I would explain that from our human perspective, in this earthly life, when we see something burn, we either put the fire out or the fire eventually burns out on its own. In both cases there is evidence of a fire left behind with ash, charcoal, or black burn marks. But remember when God appeared to Moses at the burning bush the bush was burning but it was not consumed. The bush had a flame but it did not burn up (Ex. 3:2-3). That is what caught Moses’ attention and drew Him to go look at it. So, it is possible for God to make something burn but not consume the item which is burned by the flame.

Two more thoughts on this. The first is that the Scripture describes God as a consuming fire (Deut. 4:24; 9:3; Heb. 12:29). This is an awe-inspiring, holy fear-filled description of God. He is an eternal consuming fire that is not burned up.

The second, I think what often confuses us is the current reality in which our physical bodies exist. If our current physical bodies are burned through house fire or cremation, they would indeed eventually turn to ashes and not burn anymore. However, at the resurrection unbelievers will be given bodies that are fitted for eternity. They will be fitted to handle the just punishment of good and holy God who executes His justice.

- 6. Rev 20:10 references the lake of fire for the devil, the beast and false prophet with eternal torment. Pastor Bobby drew the conclusion that with hell being cast in to lake of fire that those in hell will be eternally tormented too. I would like to know his references for where that conclusion comes from.**

Here are the references for where that conclusion comes from.

**Rev. 14:9-11** - “9 And another angel, a third, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and its image and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 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.”

**Rev. 19:20** - “And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

**Rev. 20:10** - “and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.”

**Rev. 20:14-15** - “14 Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. 15 And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”

**Rev. 21:8** - “8 But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.”

**2 Thess. 1:8-10** - “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.”

**Matt. 25:41** - “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’”

**Matt. 25:46** - “ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

## 7. The “Hell = Jail” and “Lake-of-Fire = Prison” analogy raised questions about distinctions between the two. E.g., Are they two separate places?

The simple answer to that question is, “yes, they are two separate places.” Here’s why. Hebrews 9:27 says it is appointed for men to die one time and then face judgment. But we know the final judgment doesn’t come until the Great White Throne in Revelation 20. So what happens in between death and the final judgment?

Luke 16:22-23 indicates that when unbeliever passes from this life they go to a place of torment. The text says, “*and in hades being in torment...*” That is immediate upon death, but it is not the Great White Throne judgment.

The Great White Throne is described in Revelation 20:13-14. Verse 13 says that death and hades gave up the dead who were in them and they were judged, each of them according to what they had done. Then verse 14 says that death and hades will be thrown into the lake of fire. It would be difficult to argue that you can throw something into itself. So the fact that it says hades will be thrown into the lake of fire, indicates that they are two separate places.

## 8. Are there degrees of punishment in hell?

This is an interesting question. This question is often prompted by the influence of books of literature, the teachings of the Catholic church with regards to mortal and venial sins, or by one’s own sense of justice and retribution for what we view as sins that have more serious consequences.

One of the classic pieces of literature that has pictured degrees of punishment in hell is Dante’s epic poem entitled, *Divine Comedy*. The first part of that poem is called *Inferno* and details a journey through hell. Hell is described as having nine concentric circles in the center of the earth where there is a gradual increase in wickedness the further one travels along those circles. Once you get to the center, Satan is found captive. The basic point is that there are degrees of punishment in hell.

The Roman Catholic church divides sins into two categories: mortal and venial. Mortal sins bring about spiritual death and exclude people from heaven and God’s kingdom. Venial sins can be forgiven but sometimes merit temporary punishment. They can be taken care of through confession and/ora with a brief stay in a place called “purgatory” after death. This is a place of fire that will burn the believer for final purification and preparation for entrance into heaven.

And of course, there are some with a strong sense of justice who almost demand that hell be hotter for the likes of Hitler, Stalin, rapists, and murderers. But we cannot be driven by these cultural influences to inform our understanding of the punishments of hell. Again, we need to allow the Scripture to speak and then conform our thinking to it. So, what does the Bible say about degrees of punishment in hell?

The simple answer is that the Bible seems to indicate that there are degrees of punishment in hell. Luke 10:10-14 is one example. In verse one, Jesus sends out 72 people to do ministry ahead of him in the towns He was about to go. He tells these followers what they are to bring and what they are to do in

proclaiming the kingdom of God. But he gives a warning and says that if the people of the town do not receive them, *“I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town.”* The expression, “that day” is a reference to day of judgment.

If you remember, Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed by fire primarily for their sexual immorality, perversion, and homosexual abomination (Gen. 19:4-11; Lev. 18:22;). That was not the only reason for their destruction as other passages indicate they were also prideful, wicked, lived in excess, and demonstrated a lack of concern for the poor (Exek. 16:49-50). However, the primary reason for their destruction was their sexual immorality and perversion (Jude 7). God’s judgement came upon them swiftly and decisively.

So, whatever judgment the people of Sodom are experiencing today in hell, Jesus says that the towns that rejected His people and His message of the kingdom, their punishment will be more severe than that of Sodom.

This idea is carried on in Luke 10:13-14 where Jesus says, *“Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty works done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. 14 But it will be more bearable in the judgment for Tyre and Sidon than for you.”*

Luke 12:47-48 indicates that the *“...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.”* This implies a greater degree of punishment. The Great White Throne Judgment in Revelation 20:12 seems to indicate degrees of punishment too when it says that unbelievers will each be judged according to what they had done. Not everybody has done the same things, but each one will be judged by what they have done.

This is consistent too with the fact that Jesus used the expression, “the greater sin” when standing before Pilate (John 19:11), and “the greater condemnation” with regards to the scribes (Luke 20:47). The sin of unforgiveness is continually referred to as a particularly heinous sin too (Matt. 6:14-15; 18:23-35).

All of this blows-up the convenient idea that many Christians believe that sin is sin and that all sins are equal. All sins are equal in terms of separating us from God. But all sins are not equal in terms of severity or punishment.

## **9. Does a person get a second chance between death and the final judgment?**

The Bible seems clear on this point that unbelievers will not have a second chance between death and the final judgment. The following verses support that idea:

**Luke 16:26** - "...nor can anyone cross over from there to us."

**Heb. 9:27** - "And just as it is appointed for man to die once, and after that comes judgment..."

**2 Pet. 2:9** - "...then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from trials, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment until the day of judgment..."

**Acts 17:30-31** - "The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world..."

**10. What do you say to someone who talks about a loved one who has passed "being in heaven watching over us" when you are pretty certain that the person who passed was not a believer?**

We need to be cautious with this one. There is no Bible verse that says they cannot look down and see the events on earth. However, there is no Bible verse that supports the idea either. So, we need to be careful about speculation. I would first, deal with the issue of people dying and then being able to "watch over us." I would ask the person the following questions:

Where did you hear that?  
How did you come to that conclusion?  
Why is that important to you?  
How does that bring comfort to you?

I would then move them towards Biblical authority. The Bible provides answers for life and death (Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:6-9; Luke 20:38). I would ask if they'd be willing to explore the Bible's teaching on these matters of life and death.

There are two bigger issues at stake here. The first is where do we find comfort? Our comfort does not come from the idea that our loved ones are looking down on us. Our comfort comes from the reality that God has created a place for those who have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ, through His gracious and sacrificial death on the cross.

The second, is the issue of their personal standing with God. I would ask the following questions:

What about you?  
Where do you think you'll be when you die?  
How do you know?  
Where are you placing your hope for a better existence beyond this life?

## 11. How does God “look upon” those in Hell? Love, anger, remorse, broken-heartedness, etc?

We cannot know how someone else feels about an issue or looks upon a situation unless they tell us. As we emphasize in our Q&A sessions, we want to know how the Bible answers our questions. Through His Word, God has revealed to us how He thinks and feels. He has not revealed to us everything, but only what He deems is important and necessary for us to know.

I have cut and pasted below, a few Scriptures that I believe address this question. It is clear that the sinful actions of people simultaneously anger and grieve the heart of God. The Proverbs passage below identifies six things the Lord hates. This is not an exhaustive list of everything He hates, but it demonstrates His hatred for both evil actions and evil thoughts.

Isaiah 59 indicates the reason God hates sin is because it separates us from Him. Genesis 6 says that the Lord is grieved as the wickedness of man. Ezekiel 18 tells us that God does not take any pleasure in the death of the wicked but also that sin will be punished. Peter tells us that God is willing that none should perish but that all should come to repentance.

So, putting all of those concepts together, we would have to say that God looks upon those in hell with a combination of anger, grief, remorse, and love. Look at what the Scripture seems to say:

**Prov. 6:16-19** - “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: 17 haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, 18 a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, 19 a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”

**Isa. 59:1-2** - “Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save, or his ear dull, that it cannot hear; 2 but your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden his face from you so that he does not hear.”

**Gen. 6:5-6** - “5 The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. 6 And the Lord regretted that he had made man on the earth, and it grieved him to his heart.”

**Ezek 18:23-24** - “23 Have I any pleasure in the death of the wicked, declares the Lord God, and not rather that he should turn from his way and live? 24 But when a righteous person turns away from his righteousness and does injustice and does the same abominations that the wicked person does, shall he live? None of

the righteous deeds that he has done shall be remembered; for the treachery of which he is guilty and the sin he has committed, for them he shall die.”

**Ezekiel 33:11** - “11 Say to them, As I live, declares the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live; turn back, turn back from your evil ways, for why will you die, O house of Israel?”

**2 Pet. 3:9** - “9 The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.”

I know for many, this has probably been a difficult preaching series. However, I am trusting that God has used it to stimulate your love for Him, your worship of Him, and your service to Him, and your passion to reach people with the Gospel. God is great and powerful, holy and righteous, loving and just. And His grace through Christ's death, burial, and resurrection truly is amazing. May His character be manifested in us.

In Christ,

pastor bobby