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DO YOU BELIEVE IN HEAVEN AND HELL?

Let me suggest that if you and I don't believe strongly in heaven and hell, that we cannot, we will not, live the Christian life as presented in the New Testament. We won't even be in the ball-park. Yes, we may present a reasonable facsimile as long as things are going comparatively well, but when the storms of life come, as Jesus said at the end of the Sermon on the Mount, then our foundation will be revealed as being built on sand, not on the rock of Christ and His teaching. Jesus went to the cross "for the joy that was set before Him," in heaven. If there is no heaven, Jesus was deceived and threw His life away for nothing.

We are promised a great reward in heaven if we are faithful and endure to the end. *"You have been born again to a living hope....To an inheritance that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you."* (1 Peter 1:3-4) If we don't really believe in heaven, there is no way we will be faithful when faced with a cross. Hebrews 11 reminds us of the suffering required of many faithful ones in the past. Those same sufferings are being endured this very day by many faithful ones around the world. An estimated 250,000 Christians are being martyred for their faith annually in this very time! Under pressure of circumstances, our increasingly godless nation could flip into persecution mode very quickly. I do believe that time will come.

If we don't believe in heaven and hell then we reject the Bible as being the written Word of God, and we reject Christ as the Living Word of God. Rather than being **the Truth**, as the Bible calls Christ, we must conclude that He was the liar or the deceived one. In my big concordance, there are four and a half pages, over 600 entries, listing the word, "Heaven." Jesus taught us to pray to "Our Father in heaven."

And Jesus clearly taught that there was a hell, a place of punishment and separation from God. Jesus said if your right eye or right hand causes you to sin, pluck it out, cut it off, *"For it is better that one of your members perish than for your whole body to be cast into hell."* (Mt.5:30) The people in our society who insist on removing the name of God and His commandments from public life and education remind me of the three young men who recently taunted the tiger in the San Francisco zoo. You will recall that the tiger became enraged, escaped his enclosure and killed one of the men and mauled the other two. "Aslan is not a tame lion!" And God is not to be mocked! Jesus said, *"Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell."* (Mt. 10:28) If we do not believe in heaven and hell, it destroys the motivation for evangelism and missions, as is true with much of the church in our nation.

What a promise, what a consolation, to know in your heart of

hearts that this short, difficult life is not all there is, but that there is a heaven, where there are no more tears or pain, and that we are going there - not because of what we have done, but because of what He has done, and His grace toward us!

While we must believe in heaven, and we also believe in the time when Christ will return from heaven (a clear Biblical teaching), that is not to be our focus. An over-emphasis on the doctrine of the rapture fosters a spirit of fatalism that aborts Christ's purpose for His body on the earth. When Jesus rose into heaven from the Mount of Olives (and I have stood on the very spot where a little, round edifice has been built to commemorate that moment, Hallelujah!), some 500 disciples watched the ascension of the resurrected Christ. As they stood looking up, *"Two men stood by them in white apparel, who said,"* (in loose paraphrase), "Men, in time to come, Jesus will return to this very spot! But why are you standing around staring into heaven? Didn't He tell you to go into all the world and make disciples? Didn't He teach you to pray, and to work, for God's Kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven? There is much to do, and time is short. Get to work!" (Acts 1:9-11)

That is God's word to us today, and it rests on a deep conviction that there is a heaven to win and a hell to avoid at all costs.

SHADOW MISSIONS

Insights from a CD by John Ortberg:

- As each person is created with a unique set of fingerprints, each person is created with a unique mission to accomplish for God.
- Each person also has a shadow mission (the default mode/Satan's plan versus God's plan). Clues that we may be in default mode: sin looks good, superficiality with people, using people, concern with your "performance."
- **Giftedness**, abilities and talents, can mask a shadow mission.
- **Character** involves the formation of my soul: honesty, courage, kindness, goodness, loving God and others, self control.
- We idolize giftedness, not character: Intelligence, strength, beauty, athleticism, music, teaching, leading, healing, miracles. We can envy people who are gifted; it is impossible to envy character.
- It requires character to bear the burden of giftedness. Ex.: Samson, Solomon. Giftedness is good, but dangerous. The higher you go in success and stature, the fewer people have the courage to speak truth into your life.
- Organizations (churches, businesses, governments) also

have a mission and a shadow mission. Denominations start with a great vision (a specific calling to advance the Kingdom of God), and usually go downhill to their shadow mission (protecting their organization without regard to people). Ex. Churches that protect priests or pastors who become sexual predators, crooks, etc.

- The shadow mission of John Ortberg's church was identified as: "A successful church for successful people!"
- Our shadow mission as a pastor, musician, politician, business leader, parent, can subtly shift from serving God and people out of a pure heart to serving them so that I appear noble, etc. (Pharisees)
- It is necessary to establish relationships with people and build trust (as a pastor or boss) before casting a mission.

IF YOU WANT IT, TAKE IT!

At the Harvest Rock Conference in Pasadena a year ago, Randy Clark demonstrated a truth about the God-man relationship that I clearly remember. (How many sermons or teachings do we remember for more than a year?) Before he began his message, Randy was giving away some of his books and tapes. He held up one of his books and said, "Does anyone want this book?" Many people hollered, "Yes, I want it." Randy said, "OK, you can have it." He stood there for a moment and repeated, "Does anyone in the audience want this book?" Many yelled and waved, "Yes, I want it!" He repeated, "You can have it." He started to repeat the words again when a tall young man ran to the front, jumped up on the platform and grabbed the book from his hand.

Good lesson, isn't it?

THE DON'T TELL RULE

Art Mathias has an interesting teaching about an obscure law in Deuteronomy 22:22-27. This law states that if a young woman is engaged to a man, and another man has relations with her in the city, then both of them are to be stoned to death. But if that happens in the country, only the man is to be stoned. The idea is that the young woman was presumably forced by the offender, and that she presumably cried out for help. If it happened in the country, she probably was not heard by anyone, so she is innocent. If it happened in the city, where people are around, then she presumably did not cry out and was a willing participant in the sin, and so both are to be stoned. (Whew, tough law!)

Art discovered through many counseling experiences that when a young woman or a child was sexually abused, and never told anyone, that they sometimes feel guilty as if they were complicit in the sin. Of course, it was the abuser who was guilty, and sometimes an abuser will threaten the life of the child or of her parents if she tells. God is certainly not heaping condemnation on the innocent victim of an outrageous assault. But the devil is! The devil will frequently speak words of condemnation to the child all the way into adulthood: "It was your fault! You should have screamed for help! You should have immediately told your mother or father or someone about the assault! Etc."

It is freeing for the person to pray: "Lord, I know as an adult that the terrible assault in my memory was not my fault, but I

have felt guilt because I never told anyone. In the name of Jesus, I forgive the person who attacked me, and I repent for never telling anyone about it. I renounce the guilt and condemnation that Satan has spoken into my mind. And I receive your forgiveness and choose to forgive myself. Amen."

One other point about these laws that seem so ruthless and incongruous in juxtaposition with a loving heavenly Father: The penalty for breaking any of God's laws is death. "The wages of sin is death." That penalty has never been annulled or abrogated, but is the same today (New Testament) as in the Old Testament dispensation. "The soul that sins shall die!" Just as true today as ever. Someone has to die when we sin. The difference for us is that God has provided a substitute, the Lamb of God, who died, the innocent for the guilty. Glory to God!

STRUGGLING TO TRUST GOD

I am sitting in each week on a counseling session in a Christian therapist's office with a lady who was horribly abused from the time she was a little child. She was the victim of ritual abuse, and has suffered with PTSD (post traumatic stress disorder) all her life. Christ is bringing healing, but it is a time-consuming, step-by-step process.

I greatly admire this lady for her courage in being willing to expose the evil things done to her, which are truly beyond comprehension (except that there really is a devil, and there are people who really yield themselves totally to him). The accuser has, of course, told her that God was somehow complicit in those horrors; that He "allowed" them; or that He sat idly by and observed them without lifting a finger to intervene. Therefore, her deep struggle is to learn to trust....to trust God, and to trust people. She shared with me a deep revelation she received from God when she was struggling with these issues, and she gave me permission to share it with you:

God's response to my question, "Why didn't You stop the abusers?"

"I wept as I stood and watched my Son agonize in the garden, knowing I could not tell Him He didn't have to drink the cup before Him. I wept as He endured unbelievable physical and emotional pain on the cross as well as total separation from me. Yes, the victory came three days later. He rose from the dead, canceling the power of sin and making the way for mankind once again to enter into a relationship with me.

"I wept, my beloved, as all those men and women through all those years did evil and unspeakable things to you. I wept when your earthly father chose not to be your covering, protecting and loving you as it was intended for him to do. I wept, my daughter, for just as it was not for me to interfere in my Son's abuse, I could not interfere in yours. I gave man a free will, and they make bad choices more than they do good ones. This deeply grieves me.

"My Son experienced victory. He was and is the victory. Victory is forthcoming for you, my beloved. Trust me, my daughter. Do not give up hope. Do not run from your journey of healing. My beloved, you can trust the Man who died for

you."

MINISTRY

Spent time in January at Clayton Gollhofer's ministry, Hope for Homeless Youth, at the Dream Center in Hollywood. Taught from one to two hours on: Sunday night, Monday morning, Tuesday morning and night, Wednesday morning and night, Thursday morning, Friday morning, and counseled in the afternoons. Two young men, Carlos and Mike, said to me, "I think you have saved my life!" (I know the Lord gets all the credit, but He lets us participate and share in the joy and feeling of glory.)

I ministered to a former motorcycle gang member, Ray, who is one of the scariest-looking guys I have ever met in all my scary visits to prisons and local churches. Ray is 5'10", 240 lbs., with 19 inch biceps, a bull neck and bullet head, a Fu-Manchu moustache, weird looking feline eyes, and his tattoos are tattooed. He told me he loves to fight and has never been beaten by only one man. I never considered challenging him. On my best day, 60 years past, he could have killed me with his left pinky. Ray wanted to leave the life of drugs, violence, and destruction. I went through all my stuff, and we prayed and prayed, but nothing happened. I suggested we fast and pray. I fasted for him for an entire day. Really! A miracle in itself. I felt the Lord spoke to me, and I shared with Ray: "I believe the Lord showed me that you are double-minded. You really want the Lord and a new life, but you have tremendous resistance to bowing your knee and surrendering to anyone, even God. Is that true?" He said it was. (All men have a difficult time in humbling themselves and surrendering their will to God. I believe this is the single biggest impediment to men become Christians.) I also felt that God showed me Ray would be a tremendous witness for Christ in the tough circles in which he has run and would influence many men for the Kingdom, so the enemy is fighting him tooth and nail. I suggested to Ray that he do some more fasting and that I would be praying for him, and I have been. For some reason, I can't get Ray out of my mind. Will you please join me in praying for him?

On the Friday afternoon I left to go to my daughter's house in Downey, Clayton said he wished I could stay and go out with them on Friday night. This was their plan for Friday evening: About 9:00 PM the whole Hope for Homeless Youth group of 30 to 40 people would go to a certain spot in Hollywood in front of a strip-club. They would take three large crosses with message boards on them saying, "God loves you this much!" They would set up a PA system, which is against the law, but the police appreciate them so much that they look the other way. They would start preaching to the strip-club and bar crowd, all positive words of love from God, and the Hope for Homeless youth would give their testimonies. God has given them such favor that sometimes the manager of the club allows them to come inside and witness to the customers and the girls. They also pray for the prostitutes that walk down the sidewalk, give them a rose, and invite them to leave that life and come to the Dream Center.

They then have a "blessing line". They form two parallel lines on the sidewalk, invite people to walk down the line as they speak blessings and prayers over them: "God loves you! He has not forgotten you! He has a great plan for your life!

Jesus loves you so much He died for you! He is waiting for you to come home!" Sometimes people are weeping by the time they reach the end of the line. Two weeks before, a young man in the line to enter the strip-club decided to go through the blessing line. His two friends would not permit him to do so, and they got in a fight. He broke free of them, went through the line and accepted Christ. (They have it on video tape.) On that night, 25 people gave their hearts to Christ on one night at this location.

After a couple of hours at this location, they go to a very dark area of Hollywood, where about 50 young men, transvestites, are selling themselves to men who cruise down the street and pick them up. (Sorry that this report is on the raw side. If it offends you, you might look for a successful church for successful people. Ha!) After they minister to these hopeless young men and invite them to come to the Dream Center, about 2:00 or 3:00 AM, they go to a large vacant parking lot where many homeless people spend the night on pieces of cardboard or old quilts. Clay's team take their sleeping bags and lie down with the homeless folks and sleep the rest of the night with them. In the morning, they get up, tell the homeless folks that the Lord loves them and wanted their team to experience first-hand the difficulties they have. They then invite them to the donut shop for breakfast and share Christ with them.

CLAYTON AND HIS GROUP DO THIS EVERY FRIDAY NIGHT! AND THEY HAVE 13 OTHER MINISTRY STATIONS THAT A PART OF THEIR GROUP REACHES OUT TO EVERY WEEK. These are the kinds of loving, selfless people that I meet on my trips. They make me feel so selfish and comfortable, but they inspire me to do better.

GO HELP THE ORPHANS IN MEXICO CITY?

Someone asked me if they could go down and help the orphans (December newsletter) for less than six months. Absolutely! If you can go for a month or two months or whatever, they would love to have you.

DON'T FORGET THE NEW WEB-SITE

www.glennbrownministries.com The site now has 20 audio messages, plus last year's newsletters. Other teachings will soon be added to "other writings".

(I tried to think of a more spiritual name, like: perpetualholyghostfirefromthemountainsofzion.net. But the one I came up with really sounds inspiring to me.)

God Bless,

Glenn

I would like to thank each of you for your support of this ministry. If any of you want to receive tax credit for your financial contributions, you may send them to:
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