

# Faith Pulpit

## There is No Hell on Earth

“I was awakened by the thunderous sound of aircraft engines. As I crept out from under my tank I saw the first bomber waves approaching . . . **It was like hell** and I am still astonished that I ever survived it. I was unconscious for a while after a bomb had exploded just in front of my tank almost burying me alive.

“When I tell you that the tanks weighed 58 tons and were tossed aside like playing cards you will see just **what a hell we found ourselves in**. It was next to impossible to see anything as so much dirt had been stirred up . . . It was impossible to hear anything because of the unceasing crashing of explosives around us . . . All one could say to oneself was ‘Will there never be an end to these explosions?’

“After two and a half hours the air bombardment stopped suddenly and the following silence was uncanny. . . All the tanks were completely covered with earth . . . Fifty men of the Company were dead, two soldiers had committed suicide during the bombardment, and another had to be sent to a mental hospital for observation. “A combat veteran’s account (Military Leadership, p. 57).

Modern intellectualism and liberal humanism have worked to discredit the Biblical teaching regarding hell. But many individuals who **observe** intense human suffering, from the devastation terrors of nuclear weapons to the destructive tortures of the Holocaust, speak about a “hell.” And when people **experience** personal pain and suffering, they likewise, amid anger, frustration, and hurt, often declare that they are going through a “hell” on earth.

God has many purposes in human suffering, one of which is to remind us of the painful effects of sin and the reality of an eternal hell. However, to speak of a “hell” on earth is to use a figure of speech which is misleading. There is, in reality, no hell on earth.

**1. To speak of a *hell* on earth is to downplay the *reality* of hell.**

Some people ask, “Is hell a place or a state?” The Biblical answer is that it is both. Jesus spoke more of hell than He did of heaven. Jesus described hell (*gehenna*) as a place of “fire” (Matt. 5:22) and “outer darkness” (Matt. 8:12) where the “worm dieth not” (Mark 9:48).

## **2. To speak of a *hell* on earth is to underestimate the *intensity* of hell.**

The Bible speaks of hell in terms that are frightening to contemplate. Jesus spoke of the “damnation of hell” (Matt. 23:33), and when He described Lazarus and the rich man after their deaths, Lazarus is in a place of comfort in Abraham’s bosom, but the rich man is in a place of conscious fiery torment from which there was no escape or relief (Luke 16:23–26).

## **3. To speak of a *hell* on earth is to misrepresent the *duration* of hell.**

The soldier mentioned earlier whose tank unit came under intense fire spoke of the despairing question. “Will there never be an end to these explosions?” Although it may have seemed like an eternity, the end eventually came, either by deliverance, death, or psychological denial. But for those in the real eternal hell described in the Bible, there is no “end” and there is no “escape” (Luke 16:26, Mark 3:29, Heb. 6:2, Jude 7).

## **4. To speak of a *hell* on earth is to ignore the *purpose* of hell.**

God prepared hell as a place of eternal punishment for the Devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Hell was not prepared for mankind, but those who remain in their sin and do not turn by faith to Christ as Savior will join Satan and his angels in hell after the Great White Throne Judgment (Rev. 20:11–15).

Jesus spoke soberly of the reality of hell in order to remind men of the seriousness of eternal matters. Much of His ministry was positive. He invited “all who labor and are heavy laden” to come to Him to find “rest” (Matt. 11:28–30). Jesus ministered lovingly and graciously to those in need, but he spoke honestly and seriously about the reality of judgment. The ominous threat of an eternal hell should be a strong **motivation to seek salvation** in Christ. Jonathan Edwards’ famous sermon “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” was effective in sparking a great revival in his day. The Bible says that “now is the accepted time, now is the day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2).

The reality of hell is also a **motivation to present the Gospel to others**. Martin Marty of the University of Chicago Divinity School has observed that in much of contemporary Christianity “hell has disappeared and no one noticed.” He added that if Christians “really believed in hell, they wouldn’t be watching basketball or even the TV preachers. They’d be out rescuing people.”

Evangelical Christians need a new vision of the reality of hell in order to deepen their commitment to share the Gospel in the world.

## 5. To speak of *hell* on earth is to miss the *morality* of hell.

Over the centuries, some theologians who call themselves Christian have questioned whether a “just and loving God” would actually create an eternal hell and send men to it. Others have declared that “hell” is merely a symbol for anguish caused by a lack of self-actualization and goodness, and the only sufferings mankind faces are temporal sufferings experienced on earth. The idea of God consigning men to hell is offensive to natural human reason, and so unsaved men often use the Biblical idea of hell as an excuse to reject Christ and His salvation.

Henry Morris has clearly stated, “Not only is the doctrine of eternal hell clearly taught in the Scriptures—especially by Christ Himself—but it is really the only reasonable answer to the problem of unrepented sin” (*Many Infallible Proofs*, p. 151).

God has provided a Savior in Jesus Christ His Son. He bore the penalty of our sins in His sufferings on the cross. The infinite God-Man experienced the infinite sufferings of an eternal hell for every person, because He loves every person and wants to draw them to Himself.

The idea of a “hell” on earth has many misleading implications, but the fact of human suffering is an opportunity for believers to reaffirm the reality of the effects of human sin. There is a real salvation and a real heaven; there is a real hell to avoid and real sin to overcome. Suffering causes many people to turn to fellow human beings for help, but ultimate deliverance and comfort is found only by faith in Jesus Christ (2 Cor. 1:3,4). We who know Christ as Savior must dedicate ourselves afresh to point others to Him.

Hell is what every fallen human being deserves, but God in His grace sent His Son to die on the cross for us, that we might not be condemned, but find eternal life through faith in Him (John 3:16–18).

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