



Can you go to hell for telling a lie? Part II

Last month I highlighted the fact that this question grew out of a healthy "Fear of the Lord" - and the Bible tells us (in Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10) "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*"

This month I promised to deal with the "hell" aspect of the question.

First off, congratulations to the questioner for recognizing that there is indeed a literal hell. "Hell" is not a popular thing to believe in these days. You may have noticed back in April that Franklin Graham (Billy Graham's son) got all sorts of grief for declaring his belief in a literal hell. It seems that many Christians - and Christian churches - have discarded the belief in hell as "outdated."

I sometimes hear people who say they believe in Jesus also say that they don't believe in hell. But you really can't believe in the First without also believing in the second. If you believe in Jesus, you also have to believe in what He said, and Jesus talked many times about there being a literal place of eternal fire and suffering. He talked about it as a real place where real people go. Check out, for example, Matthew 5:22, Matthew 13:36-43, Matthew 25:31-46, Mark 9:42-48. Hell is His idea, not ours.

Just because we might not like the idea that such a place exists - and that real people go there for eternity - doesn't mean that 'not believing in it' will make it go away. That's like saying, "I don't believe in tornadoes, because I don't like the idea that tornadoes exist and take people's homes and lives away. My 'not believing' in them, doesn't change the fact they are indeed real and devastating.

I once heard someone describe hell like this:

It's a place where God isn't - a place lacking anything good.

That makes sense. If God isn't present (and He's the source of all good) then it naturally follows that there is nothing good in hell. Nothing. But maybe the best explanation I've heard was from a mom trying to explain it to her young son: "*Hell is a place where all your bad dreams come true.*" I heard that and thought, "Wow! That's it. That sums it up."

The best response to the reality of a devastating tornado is to be prepared and heed the warning signs. We can't escape them by pretending they don't exist. But we can be prepared and take the necessary precautions so they don't destroy us when they come. It's the same thing when it comes to hell.

To answer the question, "Hell is real. And, no. It's not specific sins - like lying - that send people there." That answer definitely needs a bit more explaining, but I've taken up enough space for one month, so the explanation will have to wait until month Until then, please remember....

...on Good Friday, Jesus did *everything* that ever needed to be done to keep anyone from having to be separated from Him for eternity. He died to forgive *all* sin - including lying. And God promises that everyone who repents of their sin and trusts in Jesus and what He did on Good Friday and Easter Sunday will spend eternity in with Him in heaven. That's the Good News we celebrate every Sunday.

Thanks for asking,
Pastor David

Send your questions to <mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net>