

## **The Perishing People**

Are those who reject Christ going to perish? Is perishing still in God's vocabulary? Yes, *perishing* is still an integral part of John 3:16. It's what happens to the one who does *not* believe in Jesus Christ. "...God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36).

These days, too much of purported Christian media and too many so-called Christian podiums and pulpits publicize God's love but disregard His wrath. In their opinion, hell can't be real because, then, a loving God would be guilty of cruel and unusual punishment. Many of them are consciously or subconsciously promoting universal salvation. Enough of them are purely "positive" thinkers and preachers. But, what concerns me even more is that professing middle-of-the-road Evangelicals are substantially responsible for the dearth of biblically-balanced teaching about punishment in hell and rewards in heaven. As a matter of fact, we don't hear much about *any* future consequences – bad *or* good. It's mostly about our benefits and blessings – here and now. The focus is on me, not on Christ. (See Galatians 2:19, 20) And who would care to protest against a "feel good" gospel? Who would dare to question what is in vogue?

*In all fairness to perishing souls, they need to know what awaits them if they reject God's goodness.* If we don't want people to perish, we have to talk to them about it. Representatives of the "ministry of reconciliation" (2 Cor. 5:18) need to present both sides of God's plan of salvation – not just half of it. We do the unsaved no favors by withholding from them crucial Gospel realities – though they may be unpopular, unpleasant and even offensive. Is our silence an apology for God's flawed personality? Is righteous indignation a defect? Do we need to protect God from himself? Does he ask us to make his message more palatable? God is not ashamed of his anger or embarrassed by his wrath. Nor should we. Apostle Paul tells the elders of the church at Ephesus: "... I didn't shrink from declaring *all* God's message to you."(Acts 20:27)

Anyway, you don't have to take my word for this serious state of affairs. Listen to ten talks or sermons from podium or pulpit, radio or TV and track the love content (compassion, mercy and grace) versus the wrath content (anger, fury and retribution) and find out for yourself. And, if you happen to be a Bible teacher, preacher, pastor or evangelist, look at your last half-dozen lectures/lessons/sermons/talks and see how you did.

(I welcome your thoughts on this subject.)

### **Our responsibility to warn people of impending danger.**

If I say to the wicked, 'You are going to die,' and you don't sound the alarm warning them that it's a matter of life or death, they will die and it will be your fault. I'll hold you responsible. (Ezek. 3:18, The Message)

"Though such passages refer to the national covenant made with Israel, they are equally to be applied to the final state of all men under every dispensation. We are not only to encourage and comfort those who appear to be righteous, but they are to be warned, for many have grown high-minded and secure, have fallen, and even died in their sins. Surely then the hearers of the gospel should desire warnings, and even reproofs." – *Matthew Henry\**

"If I say to the wicked, 'Wicked man, wicked woman, you're on the fast track to death!'

and you don't speak up and warn the wicked to change their ways, the wicked will die unwarned in their sins and I'll hold you responsible for their bloodshed" (Ezek. 33:8, The Message).

"The prophet is a watchman to the house of Israel. His business is to warn sinners of their misery and danger. He must warn the wicked to turn from their way, that they may live. If souls perish through his neglect of duty, he brings guilt upon himself. See what those have to answer for, who make excuses for sin, flatter sinners, and encourage them to believe they shall have peace, though they go on. [Emphasis added by ps.] How much wiser are men in their temporal than in their spiritual concerns! They set watchmen to guard their houses, and sentinels to warn of the enemies' approach [and, I – ps – might add: we warn not only our loved ones but even strangers, of impending danger], but where the everlasting happiness or misery of the soul is at stake, they are offended if ministers obey their Master's command, and give a faithful warning; they would rather perish, listening to smooth things." – *Matthew Henry*

I can visualize a lost soul standing before the Judgment Throne of God and saying: "I was told about the love of God and even about being born again, but no one told me what would happen to me if I didn't accept Christ."

"Anyone whose name was not found inscribed in the Book of Life was hurled into Lake Fire" (Rev. 20:15, The Message).

"...so proclaim the Message with intensity; keep on your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don't ever quit. Just keep it simple. You're going to find that there will be times when people will have no stomach for solid teaching, but will fill up on spiritual junk food - catchy opinions that tickle their fancy. They'll turn their backs on truth and chase mirages" (2 Tim. 4:2-4, The Message).

\*Matthew Henry (1662-1714) was a Welsh-born, English nonconformist minister and Bible commentator. He is remembered for his practical and devotional multi-volume Exposition of the Old and New Testaments which is still published. ♦♦♦