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Sermon Notes

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The Eternal Fire Prepared for the Devil and His Angels

Matthew 25:31-46

As we come for a second week to a consideration of this incredibly solemn passage of Scripture, commonly called “The Sheep and the Goats”, but really Christ’s warning concerning the realities of Judgment Day, we conclude our journey through Matthew 24-25 with a careful look at the doctrine of Hell.

We have already had several sermons in which a significant portion of the sermon concentrated on the glories and joys and rewards of HEAVEN... but Christ did not stop there but warned also many times about the doctrine of HELL:

In his Judgment on the Goats, King Jesus will say this:

Matthew 25:41 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

And at the end of the account, it says these terrifying words:

Matthew 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

Frankly, the issue of hell has been hanging over us for some time in our studies in the Gospel of Matthew 24-25, as Christ gets the church and the world ready for the circumstances of His Second Coming and the Judgment Day that will follow:

Matthew 24:30 "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory.

All the nations of the earth will MOURN because Christ’s Second Coming comes with power and glory to result in their DESTRUCTION

Matthew 24:37-39 As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. ³⁸ For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; ³⁹ and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.

Christ likens His Second Coming to the circumstances of the flood at the time of Noah... and that flood was a devastating act of judgment on a sinful human race

In the parable of the faithful and unfaithful stewards, Christ addresses the case of the wicked steward who beats his fellow servants and eats and drinks with drunkards. His master will surprise him and judge him most severely:

Matthew 24:51 He will cut him to pieces and assign him a place with the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

In the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, hell is again hinted at:

Matthew 25:10-12 The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. ¹¹ "Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

In the Parable of the Talents, we have this:

Matthew 25:30 throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

And now, in the sheep and the goats, we have again Christ's terrifying warning concerning hell:

Matthew 25:41 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.

Matthew 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

To be fully faithful to Jesus is to embrace EVERYTHING He teaches, and to EMPHASIZE everything He emphasizes!!! We can't pick and choose... we have to understand this terrifying doctrine of hell

Two years ago, some members of our staff and I went to Ridgecrest for a conference, and we were all stunned and moved by a powerful sermon by Don Whitney entitled "The Reality of Hell" He began with these words:

Those who are not church-goers believe that men who preach from the Bible are always preaching about hell. Those who are church-goers but who are not Southern Baptists typically believe Southern Baptist preachers frequently preach about hell. However, regardless of your denominational background, can you remember the last time you heard an entire sermon about hell?

More and more evangelicals are now moving toward an inclusive position on

how people get to heaven. That is, that the gates of heaven are opening wider to people of other faiths and that hell is less of a threat than previously preached for Jews, Muslims, Hindus and others. For professing Christians who are not evangelicals, the consensus is fast becoming that in the end almost no one will go to hell.

[Recently, R.C. Sproul said "The prevailing doctrine of justification today is not justification by faith alone. It's not even justification by good works or by a combination of faith and works. The prevailing notion of justification in Western culture today is justification by death. It's assumed that all one has to do to be received into the everlasting arms of God is to die," There is no hell, or if there is, God would never send anyone but the worst people to hell... as long as you're not a Hitler or some serial killer, you're safe from hell!]

In January of 1996, the Church of England and its American counterpart, the Episcopal church, officially rejected the traditional view of hell and embraced what is known as annihilationism, or the view that those who aren't allowed into heaven will be annihilated, or cease to exist. They said that the orthodox view of hell implies that God is "a sadistic monster who consigned millions to eternal torment." (Chicago Tribune, January 28, 1996.)

In October of 2007, on the front of USA Today, the question was "Is there a hell?" and forty eight percent, or almost half, of American adults said no, there is no hell.

Others spend time redefining hell:

In 1999, Pope John Paul II stirred up a debate by describing hell as "the state of those who freely and definitely separate themselves from God, the source of all life and joy."

But Jesus described it as a place of active torment, an eternal fire where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth... It's not so much that God is absent... it's that He's actively present there in power to destroy sinners forever.

So... this morning, despite the discomfort of facing the truth, we are going to look carefully at the biblical doctrine of hell

I. Understanding the Doctrine of Hell

A. Definition

Wayne Grudem: "Hell is a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked."

B. Jonathan Edwards and John Piper on Hell

1. Jonathan Edwards, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

O sinner! consider the fearful danger you are in: it is a great furnace of wrath, a wide and bottomless pit, full of the fire of wrath, that you are held over in the hand of that God, whose wrath is provoked and incensed as much against you, as against many of the damned in hell. You hang by a slender thread, with the flames of divine wrath flashing about it, and ready every moment to singe it, and burn it apart; and you have no interest in any Mediator, and nothing to lay hold of to save yourself, nothing to keep off the flames of wrath, nothing of your own, nothing that you ever have done, nothing that you can do, to induce God to spare you one moment.

2. Piper's comments

a. Edwards struggling with language to describe Revelation 19:15

Revelation 19:15 he [Christ] treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

The words are exceeding terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful: but it is "the fierceness and wrath of God! The fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?"

b. Why did he wrestle with such images?

What high school student is ever asked to come to grips with what really is at issue here? If the Bible is true, and if it says that someday Christ will tread his enemies like a winepress with anger that is fierce and almighty, and if you are a pastor charged with applying Biblical truth to your people so that they will flee the wrath to come, then what would *your* language be? What would you say to make people feel the reality of texts like these?

Edwards labored over language and over images and metaphors because he was so stunned and awed at the realities he saw in the Bible. Did you hear that one line in the quote I just read: "Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?" Edwards believed that it was impossible to exaggerate the horror of the reality of hell.

High school teachers would do well to ask their students the really probing question, "Why is it that Jonathan Edwards struggled to find images for wrath and hell that shock and frighten, while contemporary preachers try to find abstractions and circumlocutions that move away from concrete, touchable Biblical pictures of unquenchable fire and undying worms and gnashing of teeth?" If our students were posed with this simple, historical question, my guess is that some of the brighter ones would answer: "Because Jonathan Edwards really believed in hell, but most preachers today don't."

C. Natural Human Repugnance

1. Mark Twain

"it is believed by everyone that when God was in heaven he was stern, hard, resentful, jealous and cruel, but that when he came down to earth (as Jesus), he became the opposite... sweet, gentle merciful, forgiving. But Jesus was a thousand billion times crueler than ever he was in the Old Testament... Meek and gentle? By and by we will examine that popular sarcasm by the light of the hell which he invented."

The invention of hell is "the prodigious crime" of the Bible

2. Charles Darwin

In his autobiography, he wrote of his spiritual slide from acceptance of general Christian doctrine to complete unbelief. The key step was his rejection of the doctrine of hell:

"I can hardly see how anyone ought to wish Christianity to be true; for if so, the plain language of the text seems to show that the men who do not believe, and this would include my Father, Brother, and almost all my best friends, will be everlastingly punished. And this is a damnable doctrine."

3. Clark Pinnock

Canadian theologian who's wandered far from his evangelical roots:

"I was led to question the traditional belief in everlasting conscious torment because of moral revulsion and broader theological considerations, not first of all on scriptural grounds. It just does not make any sense to say that a God of love will torture people forever for sins done in the context of a finite life.... It's time for evangelicals to come out and say that the biblical and morally appropriate doctrine of hell is annihilation, not everlasting torment." (*Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue*, 226-7)

4. John Stott

Emotionally, I find the concept [of eternal conscious torment] intolerable and do not understand how people can live with it without either cauterizing their feelings or cracking under the strain. But our emotions are a fluctuating, unreliable guide to truth and must not be exalted to the place of supreme authority in determining it . . . my question must be — and is — not what does my heart tell me, but what does God's word say? [Stott, *Essentials*, 315-16.]

D. Christ's Emphasis on Hell

1. Dorothy Sayers' quote

There seems to be a kind of conspiracy, especially among middle-aged writers of vaguely liberal tendency, to forget, or to conceal, where the doctrine of Hell comes from. One finds frequent references to the "cruel and abominable mediaeval doctrine of hell," or "the childish and grotesque mediaeval imagery of physical fire and worms." ...

But the case is quite otherwise; let us face the facts. The doctrine of hell is not "mediaeval": it is Christ's. It is not a device of "mediaeval priestcraft" for frightening people into giving

money to the church: it is Christ's deliberate judgment on sin. The imagery of the undying worm and the unquenchable fire derives, not from "mediaeval superstition," but originally from the Prophet Isaiah, and it was Christ who emphatically used it.... one cannot get rid of it without tearing the New Testament to tatters. We cannot repudiate Hell without altogether repudiating Christ. (*A Matter of Eternity*, 86)

2. Jesus Christ taught more about hell than anyone else in the Bible
3. the following is a partial listing of Jesus' statements about hell

Matthew 5:22 Again, anyone who says to his brother, 'Raca, 'is answerable to the Sanhedrin. But anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell.

Matthew 8:11-12 I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. ¹² But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 10:28 Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.

[the Parable of the Wheat and Weeds] *Matthew 13:41-42 The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. ⁴² They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

[the Parable of the Good and Bad Fish] *Matthew 13:49-50 This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous ⁵⁰ and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

[the Parable of the Wedding Banquet] *Matthew 22:13-14 Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' ¹⁴ "For many are invited, but few are chosen."*

Matthew 23:33 "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?"

Mark 9:43-49 If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go into hell, where the fire never goes out. ⁴⁴ ⁴⁵ And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life crippled than to have two feet and be thrown into hell. ⁴⁶ ⁴⁷ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, ⁴⁸ where "their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' ⁴⁹ Everyone will be salted with fire.

Luke 13:23-28 *Someone asked him, "Lord, are only a few people going to be saved?" He said to them, ²⁴ "Make every effort to enter through the narrow door, because many, I tell you, will try to enter and will not be able to. ²⁵ Once the owner of the house gets up and closes the door, you will stand outside knocking and pleading, 'Sir, open the door for us.' "But he will answer, 'I don't know you or where you come from.' ²⁶ "Then you will say, 'We ate and drank with you, and you taught in our streets.' ²⁷ "But he will reply, 'I don't know you or where you come from. Away from me, all you evildoers!' ²⁸ "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.*

[The Rich Man and Lazarus] **Luke 16:23-24** *In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'*

E. Scriptural Descriptions

1. the purpose: punishment for sin... both sins of commission and of omission

Revelation 21:8 *But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars-- their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."*

Romans 2:5-6 *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done."*

Romans 2:12 *All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.*

Colossians 3:5-6 *Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. ⁶ Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.*

Note sin of omission in Sheep and the Goats:

Matthew 25:41-42 *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. ⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink*

2. the percentages: the majority of the human race

Matthew 7:13-14 *"Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.*

3. The timing: after the Great White Throne Judgment

Revelation 20:11-12 *Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. ¹² And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.*

4. The Lake of Fire

Matthew 25:41 *"Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.*

Revelation 20:14-15 *Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. ¹⁵ If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.*

Matthew 13:42 *They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*

Mark 9:47-48 *hell, ⁴⁸ where "'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.'*

Revelation 14:10-11 *he, too, will drink of the wine of God's fury, which has been poured full strength into the cup of his wrath. He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb. ¹¹ And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.*

5. Tophet/Gehenna

Isaiah 30:33 *Topheth has long been prepared; it has been made ready for the king. Its fire pit has been made deep and wide, with an abundance of fire and wood; the breath of the LORD, like a stream of burning sulfur, sets it ablaze.*

- a. Tophet, also known as Gehenna, was a real place near Jerusalem
- b. It was a small valley south-southwest of Jerusalem
- c. There the wicked people of Judah, led by evil kings like Ahaz (2 Chronicles 28:3) and Manasseh (2 Chronicles 33:6), sacrificed their own children to Molech, burning them in a fire there
- d. Tophet became associated with judgment and slaughter, and the Prophet Jeremiah said it would be filled with dead bodies as a judgment from God
- e. In Christ's day, Gehenna was used as a garbage pit, constantly burning the refuse and dead animals of the city
- f. Jesus picked up on this image as a picture of hell

Matthew 5:22 anyone who says, 'You fool!' will be in danger of the fire of hell. [Greek = gehenna]

6. shut out from God's loving presence

2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. ⁹ They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power

7. excluded from heaven

Matthew 8:12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 22:13 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 25:11-12 Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' ¹² "But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.'

Matthew 25:30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Luke 13:28 "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out.

Revelation 22:14-15 "Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. ¹⁵ Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood.

8. A conscious punishment

Luke 16:23-24 In hell, where he was in torment, he looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. ²⁴ So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.'

9. a place of great torment

Luke 16:23 In hell, where he was in torment,

Luke 16:25 ... you are in agony.

Luke 16:28 for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

Revelation 14:11 the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever.

10. eternal punishment

Matthew 25:46 "Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life."

In other words, it is as ETERNAL as heaven is... annihilation cannot be possible

Mark 9:43 ...hell, where the fire never goes out.

Revelation 14:11 And the smoke of their torment rises for ever and ever. There is no rest day or night

11. destruction

2 Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction

12. eternal regret

Matthew 13:50 there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.

Luke 16:25 "But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony.

13. utter darkness

Exodus 10:21 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Stretch out your hand toward the sky so that darkness will spread over Egypt-- darkness that can be felt."

2 Peter 2:17 Blackest darkness is reserved for them.

Matthew 22:13 cast him into the outer darkness.

14. Christ directly observing

Revelation 14:10 He will be tormented with burning sulfur in the presence of the holy angels and of the Lamb.

Christ is not squeamish or embarrassed about what He'd doing to the damned... neither are the holy angels

Hell isn't something happening that God doesn't know about, or that God merely tolerates... hell is something that God does to the wicked as a direct expression of His wrath against them for their rebellion

F. Refuting the Foolish Statement: God Doesn't Send Anyone to Hell

1. this statement is made by evangelicals who affirm the doctrine of hell, but who try to separate it from God

2. they say “God doesn’t actually send anyone to hell; rather they go their of their own free will; for all their lives they have chosen to go their separate ways from God, and now He is merely giving them what they have always chosen.”
3. this view makes human choice the final determiner, as though God were somehow powerless to overturn human will
4. the fact of the matter is, people never choose hell... as rebellious idolaters, they choose their own earthly pleasures
5. on Judgment Day, when the issues of heaven and hell are clear, people will be terrified of hell and be screaming not to be sent there; no one will choose it
6. Christ Himself will dispatch His angels to bind them and cast them into the Lake of Fire... many verse speak of this action on Christ’s part

Matthew 8:12 But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Matthew 22:13 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Matthew 25:30 And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

7. as we’ve seen, Christ isn’t embarrassed or ashamed to do this... it is simple justice at this point

G. Refuting Annihilationism

1. definition

J.I. Packer: Annihilationism = a view that holds that unsaved souls will cease to exist after death

2. universalists
 - a. taught that Christ’s atonement was effective for all the human race
 - b. therefore no one would be in hell
 - c. the beginning of theological liberalism in the U.S. (Harvard)
3. cults teach this: Jehovah’s Witnesses, Seventh Day Adventists
4. recently, some evangelicals have embraced it
 - a. John Stott’s defense of Annihilationism caused shockwaves in the evangelical world

1988: “I believe that the ultimate annihilation of the wicked should at least be accepted as a legitimate, biblically founded alternative to their eternal conscious torment.”

b. Four central lines of defense

- i) Somewhat eccentric word study on the Greek word translated “eternal”, especially in Matthew 25:46 not necessarily meaning “endless”
- ii) The usual sense of destruction is of something being acted upon until it ceases to exist; they argue that the idea of the immortality of the soul is an import from Greek (Platonic) philosophy
- iii) The idea of eternal punishment for finite acts done in time seems disproportionate, out of place for a God of justice
- iv) the saints’ joy in heaven would be marred by knowing that some continue under merited retribution

5. Refuting it

- a. It’s hard to get past the parallel construction of Matthew 25:46

Matthew 25:46 “Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life.”

In this passage, the destruction of hell is “as eternal” as the life of heaven

- b. The “destruction” mentioned in the Bible is clearly said to be eternal, a destruction that goes on and on

2 Thessalonians 1:9 They will be punished with everlasting destruction

- c. Though the sin against God is done in finite life and in time, yet it is of infinite weight since God Himself is an infinite being
- d. Saints in heaven will not suffer along with the damned

J.I. Packer: The fourth argument is that the saints’ joy in heaven would be marred by knowing that some continue under merited retribution. But this cannot be said of God, as if the expressing of His holiness in retribution hurts Him more than it hurts the offenders; and since in heaven Christians will be like God in character, loving what He loves and taking joy in all His self-manifestation, including the manifestation of His justice (in which indeed the saints in Scripture take joy already in this world), there is no reason to think that their eternal joy will be impaired in this way...

So the saints will not spend eternity missing loved ones or longing for lost people that never made it

II. Application of this Doctrine

A. personal fear and motive for repentance

1. we ought to learn to fear God who has power to throw people into hell
2. this fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom
3. it should lead every non-Christian in the sound of my voice to FLEE TO CHRIST as the only refuge for their souls
4. Christ is offering to anyone who will believe in Him an eternal pardon for all sins and freedom from hell.

B. gratitude to God for our salvation

Romans 8:1 Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

1. the more we meditate on this terrifying doctrine, the more grateful we will be to God for our precious salvation!!
2. We deserved hell!!! And we are getting HEAVEN!!!
3. Also this meditation has the power to drive all complaining and whining away from us...
 - a. Stop complaining about your bodily aches and pains! God has rescued you from hell!!!
 - b. Stop complaining about your temporary financial setbacks! God has rescued you from hell!!!
 - c. Stop complaining about your feeling of isolation and rejection! God has rescued you from hell!!!
 - d. This doctrine has a paradoxical power to make you incredibly happy!

In Charles Dicken's classic, A Christmas Carol, after Scrooge wakes up from his terrifying third vision in which he is cast into hell, he realizes he is not in hell after all but is alive and has a chance to live a new life... his joy is absolutely immeasurable!! He begins leaping in his bed, shouting for joy, spending money for the poor and needy hand over fist!

Such should be your joy at your deliverance from hell!!!

C. worship to Christ for His incalculable courage

1. Christ actually drank the cup of hell for you, in your place, if you are a Christian

2. Christ's willingness to take the cup of hell from God's hand and drink it to the dregs was the single most courageous action in history

3. WORSHIP Christ for it!!!

D. motive for personal holiness

1. hell is God's response to ALL sin

Ephesians 5:6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

2. Therefore, understanding hell should cause Christians to hate sin more and fear it more and flee it more

Matthew 5:29 If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell.

E. sorrow for the lost

1. both Jesus and Paul wept for the lost

Romans 9:1-4 I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel.

2. the doctrine of hell should cause us to grieve for lost people and fear for their souls

F. zeal in evangelism and prayer

1. understanding the incredible immensity of the doctrine of hell, and that MOST people around us are on the road to destruction should motivate us to greater faithfulness in evangelism

Example from the life of Hudson Taylor... spoken at a missionary convention, Taylor told this very moving story:

While traveling by boat one day, Taylor entered into conversation with a Chinaman who had once visited England, where he went by the name of Peter. The man listened attentively to the missionary's account of Christ's saving love and was even moved to tears, but refused the immediate acceptance of the gospel. A little later, evidently in a mood of great depression, Peter jumped overboard and sank. In agonized suspense Taylor looked around for assistance and saw close by a fishing boat with a dragnet furnished with hooks.

"Come!" shouted Taylor to the fishermen. "Drag over this spot. A man sank here and is drowning!"

The Chinese fishermen answered with no emotion at all: "It is not convenient"

"Don't talk of *convenience!*" cried the missionary. "A man is drowning."

"We are busy fishing and cannot come," they responded.

When Taylor urged them to come at once and offered to pay them, they demanded to know how much. His offer of five dollars was refused. He then said: "Do come quickly and I will give you all the money I have -- about fourteen dollars." Finally, the boat was brought and the hooks let down. Less than a minute was required to bring up the body but all efforts at resuscitation failed. His life was gone.

To Hudson Taylor this incident was profoundly sad in itself and pathetic in its parabolic significance. Were not those fishermen guilty of the death of the Chinaman, in that they had the opportunity and means of saving him but refused to use them? Most assuredly they were guilty. "And yet," says Taylor, "let us pause before we pronounce judgment against them, lest someone greater than Nathan answer, '*You are the man.*' Is it so wicked a thing to neglect to save the body? Of how much sorer punishment, then, is he worthy who leaves the immortal soul to perish. The Lord Jesus commands *me*, commands *you*: 'Go into *all* the world and preach the gospel to *every* creature.' Shall we say to *Him*, 'No, it is not convenient?' Shall we tell *Him* that we are busy at fishing or other business and cannot go?

G. trusting in the justice of God

1. finally, considering the doctrine of hell causes us to reflect on the justice of God
2. it is a non-Christian who accuses God readily of wrongdoing, saying "How could a loving God send anyone to hell?"
3. however, we must understand that the justice of God is infinite... He is perfectly committed to upholding His law... all sin MUST be punished, either at the cross or in hell
4. our instinct of JUSTICE is like a flickering candle flame to the raging inferno of the sun... God's justice is like the MAJESTIC SOARING MOUNTAINS

Psalm 36:6 Your righteousness is like the mighty mountains, your justice like the great deep

5. God is LOVING toward all He has made... but He doesn't just love people... He also loves RIGHTEOUSNESS... and hates wickedness.
6. The doctrine of hell teaches us to revere God's justice... so perfectly addressed at the cross