

In search of...

Truth & Right

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Offended by Hell?

If you're a faithful gospel preacher then you've probably heard it. If you haven't, and you remain a faithful gospel preacher, then you almost certainly will at some point. A member brings a denominational friend or relative to services. You preach a sermon. Later on, the member comes to you and reports that their friend was very offended, because based on what you preached, they concluded that you thought that their particular religious group was unbiblical, unapproved by God, and therefore going to hell. Now, not that you actually said or made the statement, "They are going to hell," but you preached the word, which made it quite clear as to their eternal destination. Your congregant reports further that you and your "hateful" lesson now have to be disgustingly discussed every time they get together. So... what do you do? How do you respond? Luke left absolutely no doubt as he quoted the words of our Lord Jesus:

"Blessed are you when men hate you, and when they exclude you, and revile you, and cast out your name as evil, For the Son of Man's sake. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy! For indeed your reward is great in heaven, for in like manner their fathers did to

the prophets" Luke 6:22-23 (NKJV).

And so did they do to Jesus – the One in whose footsteps you are so faithfully following. You see, as Jesus preached and taught, He did exactly the same thing. Consider with me, the following...

The centerpiece of the so-called "Sermon on the Mount" (the very first recorded, and therefore perhaps most important message of Jesus' entire ministry; and most certainly the one that sets the stage for the remainder of it), is found in Matthew 5:20: ***"For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."*** In that sermon, everything Jesus says prior to that statement is leading up to it, and everything He says following that statement is but an illustration of it. But what about the statement itself? Have you ever thought about that? When Jesus says that unless people's righteousness exceeds that of these two, seemingly very well established, pious, popular, powerful and particular ritualistic religious groups, that they will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven, what exactly is He saying? If one is absolutely not going to

enter the kingdom of heaven, then what is the only alternative? Where is he going? To hell. The Love Incarnate Lord Jesus' implication could not be clearer. And the Scribes and Pharisees of whom He spoke could not have missed it.

The same can be said for His famous "conversion conversation" with Nicodemus in John 3, wherein He states: **"Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God"** (John 3:5). If one cannot enter the kingdom of God because he refuses to obey the divine directives for entrance into it – in this case being born again of the water and the Spirit (verse 3) – then what is the only other alternative for his eternal destination? If one is not going to enter heaven, then where is he going to go? Hell – plain and simple. Jesus didn't come right out and say "Unless one is born of the water and the Spirit, he's going to go to hell," but He might just as well have. There is no alternative destination, deduction, or even hinted at implication inherent in His statement. If one is not born again of the water and the Spirit, then they will not wind up in heaven, but in hell. Jesus so said. There can be no mistaking His message.

Therefore, is it wrong for a faithful preacher of the gospel today who is sincerely seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to insist upon and leave no doubt in anyone's mind in the assembly – friend, foe, guest or denominationalist alike – that if one does not repent and get baptized in water specifically for the forgiveness of their sins and to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38), that they are absolutely not saved and will absolutely not go to heaven (but are instead headed to hell) until and unless they do? Absolutely not. That's exactly what Jesus did with Nicodemus. And if that's wrong then Jesus sinned. And if Jesus sinned then your faith is in vain! (Hebrews 4:15)

Furthermore, what did Jesus do later when His own disciples came to Him and suggested that He might possibly want to consider "toning it down a notch," when it came to what He was teaching, because some of the pious, powerful, and highly ritualistic religious people who heard His message were offended by it (Matthew 15:12)? After all, they certainly had no trouble understanding exactly what He was saying about them, or, about what fate awaited them should they continue to worship according to the doctrines and commandments of men (See: Matthew 15:1-14; Mark 7:1-13). Therefore, is it wrong for a faithful preacher of the gospel today who is sincerely seeking to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, to inform those who are worshipping unacceptably according to the word of God, that their worship – no matter how sincere they may be in performing it – is in vain as well? Not a chance! And in fact, instead of "toning it down a notch" at His disciples request, He "turned it up a notch" at His divinely best (See Matthew 23)!

The holy and eternal word of almighty God is divinely designed to cut, shred, dig and slice, deep into a desperate sinner's heart. This is why the Bible refers to itself as **"the sword of the Spirit"** (Ephesians 6:17), **"living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart"** (Hebrews 4:12). Do those divinely-inspired descriptions sound like the word of God should somehow NOT cut and pierce when properly used? Of course not. And preachers are commanded to personally and persistently cut, thrust, and parry with that spiritual sword at every opportunity (2 Timothy 4:1-4), in order to cut through the confusion and deception of man-made doctrines, and pierce to the heart those who have been deceived by them (2 Corinthians

10:3-5). Faithful preachers like Peter and Stephen have always done so – despite the outcomes; outcomes which were sometimes wonderful (Acts 2:37), and sometimes horrible (Acts 7:54-60), but still they did what God wanted. And if they hadn't – or if they don't – then no one could ever be saved.

As a hopefully faithful gospel preacher in the eyes of God, I have every intention of continuing to use ***“the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God”*** (Ephesians 6:17) to lovingly and with as much accuracy and precision as I can possibly, prayerfully, and persistently muster, to cut, slice, pierce, and offend the sensitivities of every lost sinner I can, in an all-out and essential effort to see their eternal souls eventually saved. For my preaching peers who understand what it means to truly follow the sinless Son of God and greatest Preacher to ever tread this planet, I am sure that for them, too, there is no higher compliment that can be paid than that they preached God's word and thus thoroughly offended those refusing to follow it, just like Jesus did. And conversely, there can be no greater condemnation that can be presented to them, than that they refused to preach the truth, and thus did not offend the rebellious and ritualistic misled religionists all around them, and wound up tickling their ears and saving none of their souls which Jesus went to the cross to cleanse, and thereby offended Jesus instead of men (Matthew 11:6)!

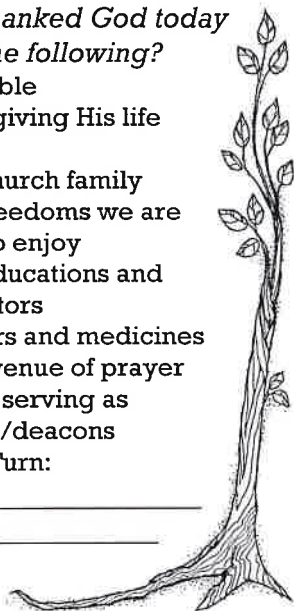
In the words of the beloved Apostle Paul, as penned to the first century congregations of the ***“churches of Christ”*** (Romans 16:16) in the Galatian region (Galatians 1:2), ***“Have I therefore become your enemy because I tell you the truth”*** (Galatians 4:16)? ***“For do I now persuade men, or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ”*** (Galatians 1:10).

Doug Dingley

**DEAR GOD,
I WANNA TAKE A
MINUTE, NOT TO ASK
FOR ANYTHING FROM
YOU, BUT SIMPLY TO
SAY THANK YOU,
FOR ALL I HAVE.**

*Have you thanked God today
for any of the following?*

- The Bible
- Jesus giving His life for us
- Our church family
- The freedoms we are able to enjoy
- Our educations and educators
- Doctors and medicines
- The avenue of prayer
- Those serving as elders/deacons
- Your Turn:



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Monthly Challenges

DIRECTIONS: *Each first Sunday of the month, we will have challenges that you should attempt to complete by the end of the month. If we all, as members, complete these challenges, our church will grow in spirit and in number.*

1) CREATE A PROSPECTIVE CHRISTIAN LIST

Mark 16:15 *"And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"*

Write down names of anyone you think might be open to contact and hand it to the elders, and provide contact information (e-mail, address, phone number, etc.), if available. Some of these interested people might be:

- a) church members' spouses who may not belong to our church
- b) people who have visited in the last 18 months
- c) people who have demonstrated any interest in our congregation
- d) parents of children who attend Sunday School
- e) people you work with or go to school with
- f) people at businesses you deal with on a day-to-day basis
- g) someone new to the neighborhood/new to work or school
- h) teammates
- i) people with similar hobbies as you
- j) members of other congregations (you would be surprised here, especially write down those who talk about God freely and proudly)
- k) anyone and everyone else you can think of

2) USING YOUR BIBLE IN THE WORLD

Share the following verses with someone who does not attend this congregation at least twice this month:

Ephesians 4:17-24

17 "Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. **18** They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. **19** They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. **20** But that is not the way you learned Christ!— **21** assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, **22** to put off your old self, which belongs to your former manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, **23** and to be renewed in the spirit of your minds, **24** and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness."