

1 Peter 4:12-19 – Part I

1Pe 4:17 (NKJV) **For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God?** ¹⁸ Now *"If the righteous one is scarcely saved, Where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?"* ¹⁹ **Therefore let those who suffer according to the will of God commit their souls to Him in doing good, as to a faithful Creator.**

We talked last week about what was “**the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God**”. However you may want to describe it, it is not good. There is not one single part of dying without Christ that is good – not even a fragment. We saw that the word “**end**” is “*telos*” and it simply means the final lot, the final and ultimate state that a person finds themselves in. It is the beginning of a different order of things. Now, what the definition of that word does not do is that it does not give any kind of description of this place called “**the end**”. We can call it the final lot, the ultimate state, or a different order of things, but none of those words even come close to describing the horrible reality of God’s final judgment on the lost in the Lake of Fire. It is not a nice thing, and certainly not anything that anyone wants to actually think about, nevertheless go there. Not this morning, but later on in this study we will address the specific words that the Bible uses to describe this place – words such as **everlasting destruction**, the **wrath of God**, and a place of **indescribable suffering**. It is described as a place of **understanding**. I.e., it is a place where men will know exactly why they are there. Right now, everyone of us in this room knows whether or not we are truly following Christ, or whether our Christian life is just a masquerade where we really have chosen to live as we want to live. It is described as a place **without any hope** whatsoever. This is an unbearable, unbelievable aspect of the Lake of Fire. Once a lost person dies, their fate is eternally sealed. It is irreversible, unchangeable, permanent, final. It is an **eternal place**, an everlasting place, one that never has an ending. In fact the word “**everlasting**” is the strongest word in the Bible for absolute endlessness, time without any end, eternity beyond eternity. I simply cannot imagine.

Now, this morning what we need to do is kind of start at a basic, fundamental level relative to the subject we call death. From a biblical perspective, there are three kinds of death. First, there is a **physical death** when a person’s bodily functions cease and the body is dead. There is no breathing, no heartbeat, no oxygen flow to the various organs, no digestion, no sight, no hearing, no feeling – nothing. Stated another way, **physical death is the separation of a person’s soul from their body**, but it does **NOT** mean that they cease to exist – not at all. You can go to the funeral home and look in the casket and think that the person who is in there is actually dead and does not exist anymore, but nothing could be any further from the truth. Their body is dead, but their soul is still very much alive somewhere, and it is the somewhere that of the lost person who died without Christ that we are discussing..

Secondly, there is a **spiritual death**. Everyone is born physically alive, but at birth they are spiritually dead. **Ephesians 2:1** explains it this way,

Eph 2:1 (NKJV) **And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins,**

This is what Jesus was talking about when He told Nicodemus in **John 3** that he had to be “**born again**” and “**born of the Spirit**” or he could not enter into the kingdom of God. Every man and every woman regardless of their personal status, their ethnic status, their social status, their financial status, their religious status, their intellectual status, or any other status, has to have a very real and dynamic spiritual

birth if they are ever going to enter into God's kingdom. The question that has to be asked in [John 3](#) is really very simple to discern. Why did Jesus have to tell this very religious man that he had to be "**born again**"? In our vernacular, he had gone to church all his life, had said his prayers each day, was faithful in his giving, read his Bible, memorized Scripture, fasted at least once a week, and had dedicated his whole life to his religion. In fact, he was one of the most respected teachers in Israel, maybe even on the planet at that time. So, why did Jesus have to tell Nicodemus that he must be "**born again**"? It was because Nicodemus was **spiritually dead**. On the outside everything looked rock solid spiritually, really good from a human perspective – but it was far from any of that. What appeared from a human perspective to be better than just okay was in reality an incredibly dangerous reality completely unknown to Nicodemus. If anybody in Israel thought they were going to heaven when they died, you can be assured it was old Nicodemus. If Nicodemus had been with us last Sunday morning when I asked you to complete this sentence "If I died today, I would go to _____, Nicodemus would have had more confidence that anyone in the room about his final destiny and he would have quickly said "heaven" – just like you and I did.

The reality of this narrative with Jesus in [John 3](#) is that it revealed how desperately blind and deceived Nicodemus really was. He was at the pinnacle of the religious world, but at the bottom of the spiritual world – and did not even know it. There is nothing worse than being spiritually deceived about our status with God – absolutely nothing. Nicodemus was at a place in his life where he had absolutely no spiritual sensibilities and no ability to act on spiritual matters apart from God's divine intervention in his life. The only way that a person can become spiritually alive is through the new birth, through being born again, through regeneration. So, in order to be able to enter into God's kingdom, we all have to be born physically and then born spiritually. Right now, everyone that you know who has never experienced this new birth that Jesus spoke of is spiritually dead, and if they die in that state (and they easily could), they will spend eternity in the Lake of Fire. Not a good prospect at all, not a place that you want to be in for eternity and beyond.

The third kind of death is an **eternal death**, and it is this death that is the ultimate subject of what we are studying – this "**end**" for the lost. Eternal death is the finalization of someone who physically dies and at the moment of their physical death, they are also spiritually dead. I.e., they have never been born again. If anyone arrives at physical death while spiritually dead, that condition ushers in eternal death. The Scriptures actually call the finalization of this state as the "**second death**". The second death is described four times in Revelation and I want to read each of those to simply emphasize the reality of this kind of death. [Revelation 2:11](#) says,

Rev 2:11 (NKJV) **He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.** ' '

[Revelation 20:6](#) says,

Rev 20:6 (NKJV) **Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him a thousand years.**

[Revelation 20:12-15](#) says,

Rev 20:12 (NKJV) **And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is *the Book of Life*. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.** ¹³ **The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.** ¹⁴ **Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.** ¹⁵ **And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

Revelation 21:8 says,

Rev 21:8 (NKJV) **But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.**"

So, the “**second death**” is an irreversible condition that someone finds themselves in, and it can actually be described as a “place”. The “place” of the “**second death**” is “**in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone**”. You better be really thankful that you are not going there, and if you are not sure, you need to make sure.

Now, I know that people in our culture simply do not like this idea of hell and eternal torment and a lake that is burning with both fire and brimstone. Unfortunately people are so unwilling to face this reality that they have devised a number of theological positions to discredit it altogether. I will share some of these with you in another study, but suffice it to say that we have been ushered into the 21st century focused on making Christianity relevant to modern man. So, the ideas of hell and eternal torment just do not fit into this culture’s “relevant factor”. The true message of Scripture has been theologically altered to take away the emotional and physical threat and consequences of a literal hell.

Western cultures such as we live in have reached a state where having the right to have multiple choices for anything that we want has become a state of mind. We are an entitlement culture that believes there should be reparations for anything and everything – and it is getting much, much worse. We are addicted to having choices on anything and everything, and unfortunately we seem to think that we can just casually dismiss what God has to say on a serious subject and develop other choices that people would prefer to believe. So, if we change the definition of hell, of eternal judgment, and the lake of fire, then people will like us better and come to our churches. We will make them feel good about life in the hereafter. Just for instance, we have redefined God. We have made Him uniquely and singularly to be a God of love. Obviously, He is a God of love, and one of much greater love than we can even imagine. However in the process, we have ignored that He is also a God of justice. He is holy and just, and the outpouring of His wrath toward sin is just and is a proper display of His holiness.

Many people you probably know and talk to actually have convinced themselves that in the final analysis that some really bad people may actually go to an eternal place of torment. However, they believe that the way that will happen is that God will use a measuring scale. If our good deeds outweigh our bad deeds, then we will make it into heaven. So, if we perceive of ourselves as really good people – well there you go – a free ticket to heaven. I was really good! Nothing, absolutely nothing could be further from the truth. The problem is simple – we do not have any good works to commend us to God for

salvation. In [Romans 3](#) Paul clearly teaches that we are all guilty and that our guilt is enormous and increasing. Then he teaches that there is nothing that we can personally do to remove it or to pay for it.

We have actually asked the wrong question. We have asked “*Would a loving God really send good people to hell?*”, when the real question should be “*How could a just and holy God ever declare guilty sinners to be righteous in His sight?*” You might could ask the second question like this – “*How can those who deserve hell go to heaven?*” If we ask the wrong question, invariably we will get the wrong answer. Listen very carefully. None of us deserve heaven, no one. No one in this building and no one outside of this building. It is an utter astonishment that God has provided anything for us at all. He gave us a perfect world and we blew that. Then He gave us His only Son and we killed Him. Today He has given us His incredible Word, and more often than not we treat it with great irreverence and indifference. In our personal sin and sinfulness, each of us has scorned everything God has done for us. Why should God owe us anything at all? We use His name in vain, dismiss His word as unimportant and irrelevant, and treat His church as if it we have no use for it. Personally, I am surprised that God saves anyone – myself included. I want to be perfectly clear that in the end that God’s Word, God’s will, and God’s justice will prevail. So, unless a person yields themselves in humble submission to God’s Word, that individual will perish and be forever entombed in unimaginable judgment. [John 3:36](#) clearly says,

Jn 3:36 (NKJV) He who believes in the Son has everlasting life; and he who does not believe the Son shall not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”

Listen to [2 Thessalonians 1:6-9](#),

2Th 1:6 (NKJV) since *it is* a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, ⁷ and to *give* you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, ⁸ in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ These shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power,

The purpose of this kind of patience with our passage in [1 Peter 4](#) is to simply find out what the Bible has to say about the “**end of those who do not obey the gospel of God**”. As your pastor, I want God to make heaven so inviting to you that those who are saved will scarcely be able to wait. I also have prayed that I will make hell so disturbing and so alarming to those who are not saved that they will quickly come to entrust their life to the only One who can save them.

Let me ask some serious questions about you and your Christian life. Where do you really stand with God? Where do you really stand concerning your salvation and heaven and hell? If the truth were really known about you and how you live your life outside of these four walls, what is your Christian life really like? Is it like Nicodemus’ life? Any intelligent business person wants to know where he stands financially. So periodically he takes inventory of what he has. He examines his accounts, his books, his credits and debits, his assets, his liabilities. Why does he do that? It is because the best way to suffer financial shipwreck in a business is to not know what you have and where you stand. Everyone wants to know how he is doing physically – the condition of his heart, his cholesterol, his blood pressure, whether he has cancer or diabetes. We would be a fool to ignore all of the markers that indicate where we are financially or where we are physically. By the same token, we would be a fool to ignore the

spiritual markers that define what our relationship with Jesus is really like. For many people in churches, it may be a very deadly and eternal mistake. Jesus was not shy in describing what it meant to really be one of His disciples. Listen to what He told His disciples in [Matthew 10:23-26](#),

Lk 9:23 (NKJV) Then He said to *them* all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. ²⁴ For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. ²⁵ For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? ²⁶ For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His *own* glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels.

Unfortunately, many people are much too proud and stubborn to face the uncomfortable reality that they are morally and spiritually bankrupt. I wish I could tell you this morning that there is no hell and that ultimately that everyone will be in heaven and spend eternity with God, but I cannot do that because it simply is not true. If I believed that I would not believe the Bible. To the contrary, I have studied my Bible from Genesis to Revelation and I have not found one single ray of hope for anyone who dies without Christ – not one single ray of hope. There is only one way to escape hell, and that is to genuinely entrust your life to Jesus Christ as your personal Saviour. [Acts 4:12](#) says,

Ac 4:12 (NKJV) Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."