

WHY I DO NOT BELIEVE THE BIBLE TEACHES DEGREES OF PUNISHMENT

The doctrine of degrees of punishment has been around for a long time. It has been taught by different religious groups through the years, but of late I hear more and more gospel preachers and members of the church setting forth the idea of degrees of punishment. I think it is high time we examined this doctrine in light of God's word and find out whether it comes from heaven or is of men.

The Catholic church teaches degrees of punishment in their doctrine of purgatory. They teach that there are two kinds of sin, mortal (deadly) sin and venial (little, excusable) sin. They teach that "purgatory" is where the soul is purged from little sins or "small stains of sin". Their doctrine teaches that if a man dies having committed "little sins" he goes into purgatory to be purged from these sins. They teach that the prayers of the saints will get him out of purgatory after God has punished him a while for his "small sins".

The Calvinists teach degrees of punishment and reward. Presbyterians teach that a child of God can bring temporal judgments upon himself in this life. Baptist teach "degrees in heaven". Sam Morris said, "The way I live has nothing whatsoever to do with the salvation of my soul. It has everything to do with what I will get in the way of reward when Christ comes back a second time". (from *"Do A Christian's Sins Damn His Soul?"* by Sam Morris).

ALL SIN IS EQUAL BEFORE GOD

The Bible does not teach that there are "big sins" and "little sins". The idea of big sins and little sins is from the Catholic church, not the word of God. Sin means "to miss the mark". Sin is the transgression of the law of God (I John 3:4). God's wrath is equal against ungodliness and unrighteousness (Rom. 1: 18). Paul said that *"they which commit such things are worthy of death"*. (Rom. 1: 32)

One sin will condemn one to hell. James said, *"For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law"* (James 2: 10 - 11). Jesus said a person is to be disfellowshipped by God's people, the church, for one fault, or sin, which he has committed against a brother if he will not correct that sin (Matt. 18: 15 - 17). Ananias and Sapphira told one lie and God took their lives (Acts 5). Friend, how many sins would Jesus have had to commit to have failed to be our Savior? You know if He had committed one sin He would have failed! He committed none! (Heb. 4:15; Heb. 9:14; I Pet. 2:22).

HELL IS NOT DESCRIBED IN THE BIBLE BY DEGREES, IT IS A COMMON PUNISHMENT

The devil, the beast, and the false prophet were all *"cast into the lake of fire and brimstone"* and all tormented day and night forever and ever (Rev. 20:10). Those on the left hand in the Judgment will go into everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels (Matt. 25:41). Matthew 25:46 also shows the punishment is common to all, *"And these shall go away into everlasting punishment:"*. In Romans 2: 8 - 9 Paul shows that the punishment is common, *"But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile;."*

To teach that there are degrees of punishment in hell would demand there be mercy in hell, but the Bible teaches that there is NO mercy in hell (Heb. 10: 28 - 29). There is no mercy in hades for the wicked as they await the Judgment (Luke 16: 24 - 26). Hell is separated from God and His glory (II Thess. 1: 8 - 9). Hell is the second death (Rev. 20:14), therefore those in hell are separated from God and His mercy.

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THERE ARE ONLY TWO ALTERNATIVES IN JUDGEMENT

"They that have done good unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation" (I John 5: 29).

"Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: " (Matt. 25:34).

"Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:" (Matt. 25:41).

THE BIBLE TEACHES THAT THE SAVED WILL RECEIVE A COMMON REWARD

Paul said his reward would be no different from any other faithful disciple: *"Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing" (II Tim. 4:8).*

Peter said it would be common: *"And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away." (I Pet. 5:4).*

Brethren, the doctrine of degrees of punishment is not taught in the word of God, it is a doctrine that originated in the minds of men. Plain passages in the New Testament teach that all sin is equal before God, and that punishment for sin is common and the reward for the righteous will be common.

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