



### Can you go to hell for telling a lie? Part III

In May I highlighted the fact that this question grew out of a healthy "Fear of the Lord" - and the Bible tells us (in Psalm 111:10 and Proverbs 9:10) "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*" Last month I focused on the fact that hell is indeed a real place - and our not wanting it to exist doesn't change the fact that it does. I also answered that "*No, it's not individual sins like lying that get you a ticket there.*" That answer needed more explanation than we had room for last month, so here's the explanation...

A little background about why hell exists is a good place to begin. Being separated from God (hell), was not in God's design for any of His creation. God created us to live in His presence - to be where He is - for eternity. Grab your Bible and read Genesis Chapter Two. You'll get a glimpse of life the way it was intended to be lived - in the physical, visible, audible presence of God. But when Adam and Eve introduced sin (disobedience to God) into the world, one of the consequences was that they (and all mankind after them) lost that right/privilege to be in the physical, visible presence of God. Quite simply, a sinless God can't be in the presence of sin.

Maybe it will be helpful to think of hell as like a leper colony.

The Bible tells of leper colonies, places where those suffering from the skin disease of leprosy were quarantined from the people who did not have the disease. The only way out of the colony was to be healed - or "cleansed" - of the disease.

Each one of us is afflicted with a kind of "spiritual leprosy," not a skin-disease but a *sin-disease* (a terminal spiritual illness we call "original sin"). As such, we cannot come into contact with our sinless God (the only one who doesn't have the disease). We must be "quarantined" from Him until we are healed - or cleansed - of sin. Every human being since Adam and Eve has been born with this leprous "sin condition." Hell (that place where God isn't) is the place of eternal quarantine for those who are never healed. Better stated: Those who *refuse* to be healed.

You see, thankfully, Jesus has provided the cure. He took our sin-condition upon Himself on the cross. It's on that cross that we hear him say, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken me.*" To be forsaken is to be abandoned. Jesus was abandoned by God while on His cross. In other words, He was literally suffering hell. He was assigned to that "leper colony" in spite of the fact that He had no "sin-condition." He did it as a substitute - in our place. He took our sin-sickness, was quarantined by God for it, and offers us His healing forgiveness that cleanses us from all our sin. "*By his stripes (suffering) we are healed,*" says the prophet in Isaiah 53.

That cure for our sin-disease is available to everyone. *For God so loved THE WORLD that He gave His only Son that WHOEVER believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* Almost everyone knows that passage, but we tend to forget what comes after it: "*Whoever believes in Him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already, because He has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.*" (John 3:18) God has provided the cure for everyone's sin-disease.

Jesus is that cure. All who trust in Jesus are healed, cleansed. But all who reject Jesus are rejecting the cure. They are choosing to stay "quarantined" from God for eternity.

What about those individual sins (like lying)? Again, it's not the individual sins that sentence us to hell, but rather our "sin-condition." Our individual sins are simply evidence that we have that underlying "sin condition." (Kind of like a sneeze is a symptom of the underlying condition we call a "cold") It's that "sin-condition" that causes us to be assigned to the leper colony of hell.

But, again, the most important thing to remember is this: God's word is clear that *everyone* who repents of sin (acknowledges that we have a "sin condition" that needs to be cleansed) and trusts that Jesus has indeed provided the cure for our sin condition will receive that forgiveness and eternal life.

Thanks for asking,  
Pastor David

**Send your questions to [pastor@livingwordlutheran.net](mailto:pastor@livingwordlutheran.net)**