

## Sharing the Good News - What does Hell have to do with it?

Imagine yourself sitting in the doctor's office as he gives you your test results. He doesn't say much about the diagnosis other than you could be healthier. He then suggests that you consider taking something to help you feel better... a remedy to treat what ails you. But, you're not overly interested. After all, there's really no bad news... at least none that he told you.

Sadly, this is how the Gospel message is often presented today. Little information is given regarding our sin sickness or devastating prognosis. Jesus is presented as *the remedy for a life that is not as good as it could be* rather than *the only One who can rescue us from the coming judgment*. We want people to be saved but often fail to tell them why they need to be. It's a weak and confusing message.

Now imagine yourself with the doctor, but the news is much different. Grimly, he tells you that you've contracted a deadly virus and that you're facing a miserable death. You're stunned. You sensed something was wrong, but never imagined that the news would be this bad. After a moment of silence, he introduces you to a remedy that promises to completely heal you if you're willing to take it. Now that would be good news... because you understand the bad news.

Have you ever wondered why the Gospel is called Good News? Though there's more to it, the good news is so good because the bad news is so bad. Look at what God says in His Word:

**Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God

**Ezekiel 18:4** "Behold, all souls are Mine; The soul of the father As well as the soul of the son is Mine; The soul who sins shall die.

**Hebrews 9:27** And as it is appointed for men to die once, but after this the judgment,

**Revelation 20:12-15** And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Also another book was opened, which is the book of life. And the dead were judged by what was written in the books, by what they had done. And the sea gave up the dead in it, Death and Hades gave up the dead in them, and all were judged by what they had done. Then Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and if any one's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.

**Matthew 13:49-50** "So it will be at the end of the age; the angels will come forth and take out the wicked from among the righteous, and will throw them into the furnace of fire; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

**Matthew 25:41** "Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels;

The very nature of the message of salvation is inseparable from the truth that we need to be saved from something. As we've read, sin's consequences are frightening. We are damned unless God does something... unless He makes a way for us to be saved. That's why we read of people in the New Testament asking, "What must I do to be saved?" And that's why Jesus is called the Savior.

Perhaps the most famous verse in the Bible regarding salvation is John 3:16. *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.* If you look closely, you'll see that there are two results for those who believe. The first is that they will not perish. The second is that they will have everlasting life. These two results are not the same thing. In the previous two verses Jesus points Nicodemus to a time in Israel's history when God punished them with death for their sin. He sent deadly snakes to bite them. When they changed

their mind and humbled themselves before God, He made a way for those who were bitten to be healed... saved from physical death - the punishment they deserved. Now, through the work of Jesus on the cross, God has made a way for people to be healed from their spiritual sickness, saved from the second death mentioned above in Revelation 20. This death is the “perish” of John 3:16. To be saved from the penalty of our sin - that alone would be incredibly good news! But in glorious addition to that, God also wants us to be with Him forever... everlasting life!

So what's at stake when we leave out the bad news as we share the Good News? Put yourself in the place of the one who is considering the Gospel *without* an understanding that they will stand before God in judgment one day. If, in their mind, the result of not putting their trust in Jesus to save them is simply separation from God, there's not much to lose if they feel like they don't need Him (or like Him). Their eternal reality will not be what they expected. Or, if being saved is communicated simply that God loves you and has a plan for your life, there are those who might think, “That's nice. I've got a plan for my life too... and I like mine better.” Will they wonder why they didn't hear about the plans God has for those who reject Him? Think about the shock that awaits those who commit suicide thinking that they were simply turning the lights out in order to stop the pain. Imagine the horror of discovering that what they found in death was indescribably worse than what they were trying to escape in life. If people don't understand the consequences of their sin according to what God says, they may never understand why they need to be saved.

Why aren't people talking about the bad news? There are those who say that there is no Hell or that it's not as awful as the Bible says. However, those who say these things are not being honest with what God says in His Word. For the rest of us who believe what the Bible teaches about Hell and the Lake of Fire... let's face it, it's unpopular and difficult to talk about. But if you think talking about Hell is uncomfortable, can you imagine how miserable it would be to actually go there? (See Luke 16:20-31) It's important to be direct and truthful.

If the building you were living in was on fire, and someone threw a rock through your window to get your attention and then warned you to get out, you might be startled or upset at first, but in the end, you'd be grateful if you heeded his warning. But what would you think if the only thing he told you was, “Why don't you come out here and join us. We're having a great time!” You smell no smoke. There's no mention of fire. You just might decide to stay inside, not knowing the imminent danger you're in until it's too late to escape.

God is the One who saves. He is the one who draws people to Himself. He has chosen to give us the responsibility to communicate the message of salvation with others. We must be faithful to the message and share it in a way that people can understand. Must we always talk about judgment when sharing the Gospel? Some people are convinced that they're lost. There may be those who are ready to put their trust in Jesus because of the work that God has already done in their hearts. But we should never assume anything. If someone is unaware of the Good News, they probably don't know the bad news either. We need to be sensitive to the Spirit's leading and seek to discern where people are at. We must be faithful witnesses, looking to the Holy Spirit to help us know what to share and how to share it. He will guide us as we look to Him. Perhaps those we share with will consider their standing before God, humble themselves, and be saved... which is the whole reason we would ever tell them the bad news in the first place.

©Without Reservation ([www.withoutreservation.org](http://www.withoutreservation.org))

Permission granted to reproduce and freely distribute this resource provided you do not alter the content in any way. All scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the New King James Version®. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.