TITLE: The reality of Hell and a 24/7 Faith?

TEXT: Mt. 23:33; Ps. 111:10; Mt. 10:28; Mk. 9:42-49;

2nd Tim. 4:1-4; 1st Pet. 3:15; Acts 16:22-34

INTRODUCTION: This morning I want to talk about a 24-7 faith. That is, as a Christian, having a faith that is active and alive 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

 If we have a 24/7 faith then, I believe, that we will also have a burden for the lost of our world. Have a concern for people who are separated from God by their sin and headed for an eternity of separation from Him in hell?

 I was watching Bill O’Reilly on FOX news a few years ago and he had a guest on that he was interviewing about the doctrine of hell. This guest, a minister with a PHD from Michigan, was talking about the fallacy of many within the Church today who believe in a literal hell. This “Christian minister” didn’t believe in the existence of hell at all.

 A right understanding of the doctrine of hell is important for us as Christians because of what is at stake. We are talking about the eternal fate of men’s souls and whether we have a burden for the lost of our world or not.

 We don’t need to get our information from people with PhD’s or famous Media people. We can get all the information that we need from the pages of Scripture to formulate our belief about hell, whether it exist or not.

 Hell is not just some theological scare tactic that God uses to try to scare people into heaven!

 Hell is a reality. Hell is as real as heaven is. In fact, there are more references to a literal Hell in Scripture then there are of a literal Heaven.

 Why? Because hell is a reality. It is a real place. And Hell is eternal just as heaven is eternal. And Gods desire is that no one find hell to be the place that they go to for an eternity..

 So God pleads with us throughout the pages of Scripture to do what is necessary to escape it.

 That pleading often comes through simply giving some description of what Hell will be like….

 In speaking to the Pharisees Jesus says this…

Matt 23:33 (NIV) "You snakes! You brood of vipers! How will you escape being condemned to hell?

 First, hell is a place of condemnation!

**2920 krisis {kree'-sis}**

**1) a separating, sundering, separation**

3a1) Judgment esp. concerning justice and injustice, right or wrong

**3b) Sentence of condemnation, damnatory judgment, punishment.**

You see, God is a just God! Just as God is a God of love God is also a God of Justice.

 The justice of God demands that all sin be judged!

 The just judgment for sinning against an all Holy, All righteous God is to be eternally separated from Him and placed in the place that is reserved for all who have sinned against Him never coming to repentance. The just judgment for sin of the unrepentant is the condemnation of Hell.

Psal 111:10 says: **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom..**

 That is why Jesus goes on to say in:

**Matt 10:28 (NIV) Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell.**

For some, just the love of God is enough to get them to right there relationship with God and serve Him, for others of us it takes the fear of God to motivate us to seek Him for our salvation. To fear Him who can destroy both the soul and body in hell.

 If we were to really be honest with ourselves it is the fear of punishment that often keeps us from breaking the law..

Example: If a Child doesn’t break into the cookie jar usually it is because of the fear of being caught and having to pay the price.

 A lot of unlawful things that we as adults don’t do we don’t do them primarily because of the fear of being caught and the punishment that would follow.

 If you were to take away all retribution for doing wrong then there would be a lot more people doing wrong.

 We have seen the evidence of this in many of our largest cities over the past year. Rioters destroying business and destroying much property and liberal mayors and governors telling the police to stand down. Or if they are arrested liberal DA’s letting them out of jail without bail.

 Some of the most descriptive words about hell are found in the Gospel of Mark by Jesus Himself.

**Mark 9:42-50(NKJV)** **42“But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were thrown into the sea.**  **43If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter into life maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell, into the fire that shall never be quenched—**  **44where *‘Their worm does not die*     *And the fire is not quenched.’***  **45And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to enter life lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell, £into the fire that shall never be quenched—**  **46where *‘Their worm does not die*     *And the fire is not quenched.’***  **47And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire—**  **48where *‘Their worm does not die*     *And the* *fire is not quenched.’*** **49“For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt.**

*(The NIV leaves out v.44 & v. 46 because they translated the NIV from older manuscripts in which these verses were lacking)*

 First, Jesus is not talking about self-mutilation here when He says that if our hand causes us to sin it would be better to cut it off and go into heaven with one hand then end up going into hell with two….

 He is just trying to make a strong point. Whatever it is that causes us to sin we need to get rid of it!

 The fact is our hands, feet or eyes are never the cause of sin.

 Sin always originates in our heart. Our hands, feet and eyes just do what our heart has already decided to do.

 Jesus was simply saying that it is necessary to get rid of sin at its source if we are to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

 The source of sin is the heart and that can only be changed by a personal saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

 But what a word picture we have here of the reality of hell. **A place where the worm doesn’t die and the fire is not quenched!**

The phrase, {their worm} in Greek is:

 ***sko'-lakes*;**

**a *grub*, *maggot* or *earth* *worm*"**

 **The worm, i.e. that which preys upon the inhabitants of this dread realm".**

 Jesus Himself here describes Hell as a place where the worm doesn’t die and the fire is not quenched!

 This speaks of a continually gnawing, as being eaten by worms but never being consumed by them!

 It speaks of continually being burned with fire but never being burned up or consumed!

 Bible scholar and commentator Matthew Henry says this about this particular verse of Scripture:

 *“It is repeatedly said of the wicked, their worm dieth not, as well as, the fire is never quenched. Doubtless, remorse of conscience and keen self-reflection are this never-dying worm. Surely it is beyond compare better to undergo all possible pain, hardship, and self-denial here on this earth, and to then be happy for ever hereafter with the Lord, than to enjoy all kinds of worldly pleasure for a season*, *and to be miserable for ever in hell.”*

Do you know what the absolute worst thing you could ever say to another person, yet something that many of us have probably said (or thought) to another person, probably in a time of anger?

 GO TO HELL!

 Think about it---Could there be anything worse we could ever say to someone? Even though I don’t remember to who I have spoken those words I do know that I have said them in my past.

 Today I realize it is probably the worst thing I have ever said….And I have asked God’s forgiveness even though I don’t remember to whom I may have said them. But He Knows!

 If you get angry or frustrated with someone in your life today and just can’t hold back tell them to GO TO HEAVEN!

 And mean it!

 What do you suppose made the Apostle Paul willing to go through all the trial and tribulation that he went through after he came to know Jesus as the Lord and savior of his life that he did?

 It was because of the burden that he had for those who were lost and headed for hell!

 It was because He understood what hell was all about!

 It is because his understanding of the reality of a literal hell, that it is a place where the worm doesn’t die and the fire is not quenched, that the Apostle Paul then gives these instructions to Timothy, his beloved son in the faith….

 **2Tim 4:1 (NIV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:**

**2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.**

**3 For the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

**4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

Paul says to Timothy**…**Timothy, I love you as if you where my own son! This is important! Listen!

Timothy, **In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom, I give you this charge:**

Timmy, I give you this command as your Father in the faith!

**2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.**

Preach the Word! Preach the Gospel of Christ! Let others know how they can be saved from their sin and how they can escape the judgment of hell!

 To do so you will need to **be prepared in season and out of season!**

Because--- **the time will come when men will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

**4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

 No literal hell sounds good. Especially to people who do not want to do what is necessary to avoid it! People who want to live for themselves instead of live for Christ!

 I imagine this pastor from Michigan who does not preach a literal hell has a pretty big congregation!

 Scripture foretold that a time would come when people would **gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear.**

**4 They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.**

This is why Paul charged His son in the faith, Timothy to: **Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.**

 Folks this same admonition rings as true for us today!

 Because hell is just as much a reality today as it was when Paul spoke these words to Timothy we need to be telling others about Jesus! We need to be prepared to do so in season and out of season!

 What Scripture is telling us is to always be prepared to share the Gospel of Christ! To be prepared in season and out of season! That means we need always to be prepared and ready to share the Gospel of Christ whether we feel like it or not!

 The fact is that if we just did things when we felt like doing them some of us would never do anything--Right!

 There are some people who are totally unemployable in the spiritual realm. People, who have to feel spiritually supercharged, spiritually inspired, before they will ever step out and do anything for God.

 Folks, our faith in God is to be a 24-7 faith!

 The proof that our relationship is really right with God and we have a 24-7 faith is when we do our best for Jesus whether we feel inspired to do so or not!

 One of the worst traps that we can fall into as a Christian is to become obsessed with our own exceptional times of inspiration. Those times when the Spirit of God gives us an inspiration or spiritual insight.

 Those times when we are on fire for the Lord and we tend to say, now that I have experienced this moment, I will always be like this for God!

 NO WE WONT! Those times of spiritual enlightenment and spiritual blessing are entirely the gift of God!

 We cannot give them to ourselves when we choose.

 If we say that we will only be our best for God when we feel like it, at those times when we may be spiritually enlightened or spiritually blessed, then we actually become a burden to God. Because we will never do anything for God or His kingdom unless we feel like it, unless we are at those high times in our life when we feel this spiritual enlightenment or blessing.

 In fact, what we can do is make a god out of our experience or our spiritual enlightenment and what we will find is that God will start to fade in our life…

 Church we are to be prepared to share the Gospel of Christ and advance Gods kingdom in season and out of season!

 Share Jesus and be His witness whether we feel like it at any given time or not!

 Before I became a Pastor and was working full time in the grocery business there would be times when I didn’t feel like going to Church or Bible study. After a long day I just wanted to stay home and vegetate, wind down.

 Every time that I pushed through those feeling and went even though I didn’t feel like it I was always greatly blessed and received something great from the Lord.

 As a Pastor there are times when I just don’t feel like doing it.

 I can remember one time I just didn’t feel like going up to do the jail ministry and almost called up and canceled that day. I pushed through those feelings and forced myself to go and it was that day that a young man accepted the Lord.

 I have come to the belief that on those days when we just don’t feel like it is the Devil giving us those feelings because he knows something great is about to happen. Happen to us or someone we may touch with the Gospel of Christ.

 Peter says this in:

1Pet 3:15 (NIV) But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.

 We are to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone for the hope that we have in Christ!

 If we are to always be prepared to give an answer to everyone for the hope that we have in Christ then it will necessitate our having a faith that is a 24-7 faith.

 It will necessitate our doing our best for Christ whether we feel like it or not!

 I doubt that the apostle Paul felt like doing his best for God all the time! Especially when he was treading water for a day and a half out in the open sea or when he found himself lying under a pile of rocks and left for dead or at those times when he faced hunger and thirst and was cold and naked for the sake of the Gospel!

 Yet he did! The one thing that sets Paul above most others is that he served his God and worked to advance His kingdom whether he happened to feel like it or not!

 Listen to this account of Paul’s life that shows a man who had a 24-7 faith, a faith that wasn’t dependent upon the circumstances of his life, but a faith that overcame the circumstances of his life….

**Acts 16:22 (NIV) The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten.**

**23 After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully.**

**24 Upon receiving such orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks.**

**25 About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.**

26 Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose.

**27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.**

**28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"**

**29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.**

**30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

Paul and Silas had just been severely beaten, severely flogged, and then thrown into the inner cell of the prison. The inner cell was the dungeon, the worst part of the prison. It was damp and probably rat infested… They lie there bloody and bruised with backs laid open, in excruciating pain…

Yet what does Scripture say that they were doing?

 Lying there feeling sorry for themselves saying woe is me! Complaining to God asking Him why?

 No! It says that they were praying and singing hymns praising God!

 Let me ask you a question? Do you suppose that they felt like it? Do you suppose that they felt like singing hymns and praising God after being severely whipped and thrown into the dungeon of a prison?

 Would you “feel like it” if you were in their place?

 I really doubt it!

 What enabled them to do it? What enabled them to praise God in the most adverse of circumstances?

 They had a 24-7faith! They knew why they were there!

 They understood that there is a literal hell and that countless thousands would go there if they didn’t stay about the Fathers business!

 That if they took a day off in their faith that they might miss an opportunity to reach just one more person with the Gospel message of Jesus Christ and see a soul saved from hells eternal fire!

 Look at the result of what happened that day in the life of Paul and Silas and I think it will put everything into its proper perspective…..

**27 The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped.**

**28 But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"**

**29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.**

**30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

 This Roman jailer probably hadn’t been too nice to Paul and Silas. He was the one that chose to put them in the inner cell, the dungeon of the prison. The place usually reserved for just the most hardened criminals.

 As a Roman soldier he was 100% liable and responsible for the prisoners put in his charge. If they had escaped he would have been put to death by his superiors for letting them escape. That is why he was about to kill himself when he thought the prisoners had escaped.

 Why would Paul stop him? This man had probably been very cruel to Paul and Silas. Why didn’t Paul just let him kill himself?

 Because Paul knew about and understood the reality of the horrors of hell and he didn’t want to see anyone go there, not even his enemies!

 And Paul had a true burden for the lost! He had a burden for this lost Roman soldier! Paul knew that Jesus came and died for this man’s sin as well as his own!

 Paul had actually been in this man’s place at one time when he stood and held the coats of those stoning Steven to death.

 So Paul cried out with an impassioned plea! STOP! DON’T HARM YOURSELF! WE ARE ALL STILL HERE!

 Why was Paul so emphatic? He knew that if this man killed himself in his lost state that he would spend an eternity separated from God in hell!

 Notice what happens?

**29 The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas.**

**30 He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**

**31 (NIV) They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved--you and your household."**

**32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.**

33 At that hour of the night the jailer took them and washed their wounds; then immediately he and all his family were baptized.

**34 The jailer brought them into his house and set a meal before them; he was filled with joy because he had come to believe in God--he and his whole family.**

 Not just this man but his entire family came to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ for their salvation that night!

 This entire family was rescued; they were literally snatched from the fire of hell that night!

 All because two men of God had a concern for the lost, a burden for lost souls, and were prepared in season and out of season, prepared whether they felt like it or not, to be used by God! Two men who had a faith in their God that was a 24-7 faith.

 Does this describe your and my faith today?

Is our faith a 24-7 faith?

 Are we living our life always prepared to give an answer to everyone, enemies as well as friends, for the hope that we have in Christ?

 Are we living out our faith in front of others, even on, especially on, those days when we don’t feel like it?

 Is it our desire to see just one more soul snatched from the flames of hell and delivered safely and securely into the glorious Kingdom of God?

 If not then we need to seriously examine our faith.

 We need to allow God to birth this kind of faith within us.

 A faith that is alive and active and productive for Gods Kingdom 24 hours a day 7 days a week, whether we feel like it or not!

 Are you up for a challenge this morning?

Don’t settle for anything less than the most that God has for you!

 As Paul said to his son in the faith…

2Tim 4:1 (NIV) In the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who will judge the living and the dead, and in view of his appearing and his kingdom…

**2 Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage--with great patience and careful instruction.**

You, your life may be the only Bible some people will ever see….