



## **A Sadness Hidden in the Gospel Story**

“Good News” is a way of defining “Gospel.” “Good” is the key word, and indeed, being completely cleansed of our sin through the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and being given the gift of eternal life is Good News!

### **Sadness? Where Is this Sadness?**

My mother and brother died without Christ. They knew the story of salvation but rejected it. There is no indication at all that they repented and believed at the very last moment. Thus, according to the Word of God, they are in hell. And this saddens me.

There have been times when I came close to falling into a depression over the above fact. Usually I ignore thinking of this reality when I come across those passages in Scripture that make it perfectly clear that hell is real.

### **For Example**

In the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 7:13–14, we are shocked to read:

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.”

Quickly we want to think of John 3:16 where Jesus says, “For God so loved the world...” What about that? Does John here trump Jesus?

Yes, I admit to thinking, or hoping, so. But it will not work. Yes, God loves His creation, and all of it, but the reality of sin changes things. Indeed, the wages of sin is death (Romans 3:23).

### **There Is More**

In Matthew 10, Jesus informs His disciples that they will be persecuted. Maybe they thought they would be honored and adored by the populace, given the great power over Satan they had been given plus the gift of healing “every disease and affliction” (v. 1). That they not be too elated, Jesus proceeds to bring to their attention a sharp and unpleasant reality.

Jesus informs His followers that they are sent out as sheep among wolves. They will be flogged and treated harshly by governing officials, both religious and secular.

If that is not enough, He tells them, “Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake” (Matthew 10:21–22a).

There is more. Jesus explains, “A person’s enemies will be those of his own household” (Matthew 10:36).

Later in Matthew, Jesus says, “Then two men will be in the field; one is taken and one left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left” (Matthew 25:40–41).

### Coming to Acceptance

Let me confess that I have softened the Gospel message by not fully disclosing the difficult passages like those cited above. I simply did not want to bring negative issues up lest I cause some to stumble or walk away from Christ.

In addition, I realize why for so long I refrained from preaching through books of the Bible verse by verse. I wanted to avoid having to deal with difficult passages. I am not likely to be the only one to do so.

Despite being a Christian since 1963 and being a preacher of the Gospel message for over fifty years, I still wrestle with the fact that members of my family, close friends, and other dear people I have known and loved will spend eternity in hell.

Will I reject the Word of God because of the sadness that occasionally overtakes me?

Will I devise another salvation scenario whereby all will eventually live in the presence of God forever?

Will I advocate for annihilationism, meaning all those outside of Christ’s salvation cease to exist? No hell, no life at all, just gone?

Or, will I leave the big picture to the Creator God? Indeed, I am merely creature. I yield to Isaiah 55:8–9:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts,  
Neither are your ways my ways, declares the LORD.  
For as the heavens are higher than the earth,  
So are my ways higher than your ways  
And my thoughts than your thoughts.

### Still Sadness

Do I yet have moments of sadness creep over me? Yes, I do. For reasons I do not understand, the older I get the greater is my tendency to think of my mother and my brother. Who could not be saddened?

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October 2018