

Can a loving God send someone to Hell?

Lifeline 11/29/2006

Jeremy Spence Director of Student Ministries

Break up into small groups of 6-10 people per group.

Share with others in your group a time when you were treated unfair? How did you feel?

Answer the following questions:

1. What does “fair/fairness” mean? **Implies and elimination of ones’ feelings, prejudices, and desires so as to achieve proper balance of conflicting ideas.**
2. Define in your group the word “just”. **Implies an exact following of a standard of what is right and proper. Legally correct, exactly and precisely.**

Is God fair or unfair? Why?

What type of God would you want, a fair one or an unfair?

Write down some key thoughts from the following verses:

Leviticus 11.44:

Psalm 145.9:

Revelation 15.3; 16.5-7:

Romans 1.18-25; 18-32:

James 1.17:

Hebrews 13.8:

1 John 4.16

Thoughts to keep in mind:

One quality of God does not **override** another quality. God’s qualities are perfectly **equal**.

God wants no one to go to **hell** but we choose that ourselves.

Creation clearly **shows** there is a God.

How have you responded?

jeremy.spence@firstbaptisthamilton.org =email

513-868-1412=office

513-374-4742=cell

www.myspace.com/bamaborn82 =myspace

www.firstbaptisthamilton.org/youth =CREW’s website

AIM=spenceopie1

513-737-1372=home

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God's *love* is the heartbeat of the gospel. Perfect love flows between the Persons of the Trinity (Jn 3:35; 17:24). At Sinai God revealed himself as "abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness" (Ex 34:6, 7), and all his covenantal relations with Abraham's descendants showed his steadfast love. The chief manifestation of God's love was the sending of his Son, Jesus Christ (Jn 3:16). The apostle John, who declared that "God is love," pointed to the cross to indicate what that love really meant: "he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins" (1 Jn 4:8, 10).

Since the rise of liberalism, many theologians have cheapened God's love for sinners by suppressing God's holiness and righteousness. The catastrophe of sin is minimized, and the cross as an atoning sacrifice and satisfaction of God's justice is denied. But God's holy and righteous love should not be romanticized or cheapened. Love is neither God's chief attribute nor a full description of his nature. Yet Jesus Christ and the cross do express the marvelous love of God—a sovereign, righteous, holy, immutable love (Rom 8:29, 30, 35–39).

Verse 20 explains that certain invisible attributes of God have been clearly perceived since the world⁷ began, specifically, his "eternal power and divine nature."⁸ They are understood from what has been made. The NEB says they are "visible ... to the eye of reason."⁹ God has revealed himself in nature in such a way as to hold all people responsible.¹⁰ They are "without excuse." Seeing the beauty and complexity of creation carries with it the responsibility of acknowledging the Creator both as powerful and as living above the natural order. Disbelief requires an act of rebellion against common sense. It displays fallen humanity's fatal bias against God. **Although the created order cannot force a person to believe, it does leave the recipient responsible for not believing.**

¹Elwell, Walter A. ; Beitzel, Barry J.: *Baker Encyclopedia of the Bible*. Grand Rapids, Mich. : Baker Book House, 1988, S. 879

⁷By κόσμος Paul meant the entire universe. The term originally designated an "ornament," and the universe was described as a great jewel.

⁸At this point Paul was using language common to Stoic thought, which entered Hellenistic Judaism by means of the Jewish wisdom tradition. ἄϊδος, δύναμις, and θεϊότης are terms normally associated with deity.

NEB New English Bible

⁹That God exists and has certain properties that distinguish him from mere mortals is clearly perceived through what he has created. Murray says that this passage is "a clear declaration to the effect that the visible creation as God's handiwork makes manifest the invisible perfection of God as its Creator" (*Romans*, 1:40).

¹⁰εἰς τὸ with the infinitive occurs forty-three times in Paul, almost always to express purpose. God's intention was to make people responsible by his self-revelation in nature.

²Mounce, Robert H.: *Romans*. electronic ed. Nashville : Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2001, c1995 (Logos Library System; The New American Commentary 27), S. 78

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