

Hell – Freedom's Greatest Compliment (Conclusion)
(Rev. Dr. John Bartol)

“Some say we have our hell on earth. We do! Hell can start here but it does not finish here.” Archbishop Fulton J Sheen

There are three kinds of death mentioned in the Bible – physical, spiritual, and eternal. They all express the concept of separation.

In physical death the soul or the real person is separated from the body.

In spiritual death the soul is separated from a holy God because of personal sin. The Bible says that “All have sinned and fallen short glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Every honest person knows that this is true. If I had never put my trust in Christ and experienced a change of heart, by the grace of God, I would be on the road to hell today.

Eternal death means the eternal separation from God. Jesus called it hell, the only place in the universe where God is not present.

I am horrified to hear about an attitude which is sadly common today. When a young man was asked if he wanted to go to heaven, his answer was “No; I want to go to hell with all my friends.” He pictured hell as a very demoralized, depraved Casino where he and his friends would be free to lust freely while chasing after the bottle, the needle, the wager or the flesh.

But here I must say in the strongest words possible that this is a complete misunderstanding and misrepresentation of the nature of hell. Devilish hell has no gifts to give anyone. Every good and perfect gift that we have comes from God. This means in hell there will be none of God's gifts – no light, color, beauty, love, joy or peace. There will be no music in hell, no fun and laughter, no friendships, no pleasures of any kind including emotional or sexual, no glad reunions for family and friends. Therefore, those who choose, yes choose, to go to hell will discover that anywhere without God becomes a place of utter loneliness, darkness and emptiness. Dante's Inferno becomes real – “Abandon all hope, you who enter here.”

But I don't want to end this message on a sad note because there is GOOD NEWS. Jesus Christ through his own death and resurrection has conquered all three forms of death.

Christ alone conquers physical death. Who else rose gloriously from the dead? He says to all who trust him, “Because I live, you shall live also” (John 14:19b).

Christ alone conquers spiritual death. The barrier between God and man has been broken down from God's side. Now we can know God in a personal, living

relationship and absolutely nothing can separate us from the love of God – not even death (Romans 8:37 – 39).

Christ alone conquers eternal death. The empty tomb proves He lives forevermore! Sin and death have met their master.

But whatever may be the uncertainties of the future; it is certain that here and now God is willing and able to deliver us from the hell of guilt and fear into which we may be plunged. There is no need for anyone to be separated from God either now or in the future.

“Let us thank God that the word we hear now is not the awful depart but the blessed COME; not the voice of the Judge but the voice of the Shepherd.”

John MacNeill.