

FAITH EFC SMALL GROUP QUESTIONS

Christ - The Focus of all Saving Faith

November 29, 2009

Ice Breaker: Read a quote from Jonathan Edward's sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"

The God that holds you over the pit of hell, much as one holds a spider, or some loathsome insect, over the fire, abhors you, and is dreadfully provoked: his wrath towards you burns like fire; he looks upon you as worthy of nothing else, but to be cast into the fire; he is of purer eyes than to bear to have you in his sight; you are ten thousands times more abominable in his eyes, than the most hateful venomous serpent is in ours... The words are exceedingly terrible. If it had only been said, "the wrath of God," the words would have implied that which is infinitely dreadful; but it is "the fierceness and wrath of God! The fierceness of Jehovah! O how dreadful must that be! Who can utter or conceive what such expressions carry in them?"

Why is it that Jonathan Edwards struggled to find images for wrath and hell that shock and frighten, while many contemporary preachers try to find abstractions and circumlocutions that move away from concrete, touchable Biblical pictures of unquenchable fire and undying worms and gnashing of teeth?

Questions on the sermon

(Don't feel you must complete every question. Use questions appropriate for your group)

"I was led to question the traditional belief in everlasting conscious torment because of moral revulsion and broader theological considerations, not first of all on scriptural grounds. It just does not make any sense to say that a God of love will torture people forever for sins done in the context of a finite life... It's time for evangelicals to come out and say that the biblical and morally appropriate doctrine of hell is annihilation, not everlasting torment." (Theological Crossfire: An Evangelical/Liberal Dialogue, 226-7)

Clark Pinnock is a popular Canadian theologian. After reading this quote, how would you respond to Clark Pinnock and others like him?

We have to admit, there are good, kind, giving and loving people in other religions of the world. Some of their morally polished lives shine with great brilliance and put our Christian holiness to shame.

1. What will be their eternal state of good, kind, giving and loving people? Why?

The times of ignorance God overlooked, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will judge the world in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed; and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead.” Acts 17:30-31

This text comes from Paul’s sermon to the Greeks on the Areopagus in Athens. He noticed an “altar to an unknown god.” So he said, “What therefore you worship as unknown, this I proclaim to you. (17:23)” In other words, he goes so far as to say they are worshipping the right God without even realizing it!

2. Was worshipping the right God in the wrong way enough for them to be saved?

3. What are “the times of ignorance” Paul talks about that God overlooked?

For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. 1 Corinthians 1:21

4. What does 1 Corinthians 1:21 teach us about man’s ability to discover salvation outside of the verbal proclamation of the gospel?