

Descent Into Hell

by W.R. Inge

The sermon describes the necessity of descending into hell in order to experience true repentance and eventually enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Scripture: Psalm 34:18, Psalm 51:17, Matthew 5:3, Matthew 16:24, John 3:30, Romans 8:6, 2 Corinthians 7:10

Topics: "Repentance And Guilt", "Spiritual Growth"

Description

W.R. Inge preaches about the journey of the soul of man, comparing it to the descent of Christ's soul into hell before ascending into heaven. True repentance for sin involves a deep sense of unworthiness and guilt, leading to a profound abasement and contempt for oneself. This state of 'hell' is necessary for one to enter the kingdom of heaven, where the eternal Good is desired above all else, bringing joy, peace, and satisfaction. In this present life, experiencing both 'hell' and 'heaven' is essential for spiritual growth and understanding, as they lead to a complete reliance on the eternal Good and the glory of God.

Transcript

Even as the soul of Christ had to descend into hell, before it ascended into heaven, so must the soul of man. And mark how this comes to pass. When a man truly perceives and considers who and what he is, and finds himself wholly base and wicked, and unworthy of all the consolation and kindness that he ever received, either from God or from the creatures, he falls into such a profound abasement and contempt for himself, that he thinks himself unworthy to walk upon the earth; he feels that he deserves that all creatures should rise against him and avenge their Maker upon him with punishments and torments; nay, even that were too good for him. And therefore he will not and dare not desire any consolation or release, either from God or any creature; he is willing to be unconsolated and unreleased, and he does not lament for his condemnation and punishment, for they are right and just, and in accordance with God's will. Nothing grieves him but his own guilt and wickedness; for that is not right, and is contrary to God's will: for this reason he is heavy and troubled. This is the meaning of true repentance for sin. And the man who in this life enters into this hell, enters afterwards into the kingdom of heaven, and has a foretaste of it which exceeds all the delights and happiness which he has ever had, or could have, from the things of time. But while a man is in this hell, no one can comfort him, neither God, nor the creatures. Of this condition it has been written, "Let me die, let me perish! I live without hope; from within and from without I am condemned, let no man pray for my deliverance." Now God has not forsaken a man, while he is in this hell, but He is laying His hand upon him, that he may desire nothing but the eternal Good only, and may discover that this is so noble and exceedingly good, that its blessedness cannot be searched out nor expressed,

comfort and joy, peace, rest, and satisfaction. When, therefore, the man cares for and seeks and desires the eternal Good and nought beside, and seeks not himself, nor his own things, but the glory of God only, he is made to partake of every kind of joy, blessedness, peace, rest, and comfort, and from that time forward is in the kingdom of God.

This hell and this heaven are two good safe ways for a man in this present life, and he is happy who truly finds them. For this hell shall pass away, but this heaven shall abide for evermore. Let a man also observe, that when he is in this hell, nothing can console him; and he cannot believe that he shall ever be delivered or comforted. But when he is in heaven, nothing can disturb him: he believes that no one will ever be able to offend or trouble him again, though it is indeed possible that he may again be troubled and left unconsolated.

This heaven and hell come upon a man in such a way, that he knows not whence they come; and he can do nothing himself towards making them either come or depart. He can neither give them to himself, nor take them away from himself, neither bring them nor drive them away; even as it is written, "The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh or whither it goeth." And when a man is in either of these two states, all is well with him, and he is as safe in hell as in heaven. And while a man is in the world, it is possible for him to pass many times from the one state into the other--even within a day and night, and without any motion of his own. But when a man is in neither of these two states, he holds intercourse with the creatures, and is carried this way and that, and knows not what manner of man he is. A man should therefore never forget either of these states, but carry the memory of them in his heart. xi.

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