

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven. (Matthew 5:16)

Making a Mockery of God's Judgment

by: Kris Brewer

*"I already know that I'm going to Hell...
At this point it's really go big or go
home!"*

A friend of mine on Facebook saw this bumper sticker while driving around in her part of the world last week and made a post about it, condemning the idea. This post got me thinking about how many people have come to view most of what we see in scripture. The ideas of Satan, judgment and Hell have become nothing more than a joke. I searched Google for the phrase above, and found that it is not only on bumper stickers, but on every type of merchandise you can imagine. It provides evidence that many people have become proud of just how wicked they can be.

I believe we have gotten to this point in society because we have had our consciences hardened by turning wickedness into humor. Think about how Satan (the ultimate example of evil) is often portrayed. He is a cute little mischievous devil with a long tail, a beard, and

a pitchfork. Wickedness has been portrayed as a mere joke. In fact, there have been many abominable practices that have been normalized into our society by making them into a joke on various television shows. Divorce, homosexuality, transgenderism, and abortion have all been written into scripts to make them seem more acceptable and normal. At the same time, moral practices such as virginity before marriage and monogamy are ridiculed to make them seem like they are extreme and ridiculous practices. This illustrates the very warning that Isaiah gave:

Woe to those who call evil good, and good evil; Who put darkness for light, and light for darkness; Who put bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter! (Isaiah 5:20)

By mocking good, and making evil just seem like a humorous situation, we have (in our society) done just what Isaiah warned of. We call evil good and good evil! Society has certainly bought

into this premise. In just one or two generations, immorality has been normalized to the point that it is accepted by most of society. Even those who would disagree with the immoral action would have been conditioned to say, "Well, I wouldn't do that, but I'm not going to say that it is wrong for someone else!" Even we as Christians have been influenced, laughing at the sinful practices that are the punch lines of the jokes.

Christians, unfortunately, have also contributed greatly to making the ideas of Hell and judgment nothing more than a joke. How many of us have seen a church sign post something pithy like, "You think it's hot here? Just wait!" Some have become so flippant with their advertising, they convey an image of a church focused more on frivolity than spirituality.

I do not want to leave the impression that all humor, or even some humor in the religious realm is wrong. Even Jesus, in the midst of His teaching would incorporate a humorous image to make a spiritual point:

And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? (Matthew 7:3-4)

Humor is a part of our nature, and can be used effectively to make a point. But, we must be careful that we do not destroy the message of the gospel by our misuse of humor. If the use of our humor leads to others believing that Hell or the judgment is not real, then we have done them a great disservice. We need to be cognizant of the fact that our misuse of humor may (in a cumulative manner) deflect the seriousness of eternal judgment. Here are a few reasons for us to be very careful with humor in these areas:

Satan is real. Satan is not a cute cartoon character. He is not a harmless little mischievous fellow. Just recently, one company has incorporated Satan into their advertising campaign for mattresses, and have portrayed him as nothing more than a grumpy fellow that provides slight discomfort to his wife (a character that portrays being married to Satan as a humorous endeavor). The constant bombardment of this type of imagery of Satan desensitizes us to the severity of his work and his nature.

Satan is described as militantly evil, ever seeking to destroy those who are seeking to serve the Lord. Paul, in Ephesians chapter 6, describes the Christian as being in constant battle with the "wiles of the devil." He is not described as being a minor

inconvenience, but rather a worthy adversary. Paul said,

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places (Ephesians 6:12).

The whole point of Paul's instruction concerning the "whole armor of God" is to ensure that the Christian is prepared for the severity of the battle that comes when fighting Satan. Peter also describes the Devil in alarming tones:

Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8).

Peter's warning gives us a good idea about how we should approach Satan. We must be sober and vigilant. The idea here is that one must be watchful when dealing with Satan. One of his greatest tools is his ability to sneak up on us and attack in unexpected ways. When we portray him (and subsequently think of him) as being a minor inconvenience, the stage is set for his violent attack. He will, under such circumstances, most likely win that battle, if not the war, for our souls!

Hell is Real. Like Satan, Hell is also real. It is the place that God has prepared to eternally punish those who are disobedient to Him. Hell is described as the place where those who refuse to submit to God will be cast (see Matthew 5:22-30). In some places it is identified by characteristics, such as "lake of fire" (Revelation 20:15) rather than by the name we are commonly familiar with. Mark uses the idea of being cast into the fire as identifying eternal destruction (Mark 9:42-48). This should give us an idea of the seriousness of Hell, and its eternally painful existence.

Should we be surprised that many have no fear of eternal destruction in Hell? They mock the idea that they are going there (as the bumper sticker we started this study with). Hell does not seem real to us, because we have made it into a joke. I recently heard a country music song in which the artist spoke of how hell couldn't be too bad, as he was already suffering so greatly in the present age. We have heard the term "Hell on earth" used to depict the idea of suffering. But, even this has diminished the concept of Hell. If we truly believe that the suffering we might endure on this earth is anything like the eternal suffering of Hell, then we clearly have lost the Biblical description of Hell! The New Testament describes the suffering of Hell as an eternal "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:51). We cannot possibly fathom the punishment that is Hell, or the pain that is associated with it.

Judgment is Real. If Satan is real, and if Hell is real, then the coming of God's judgment is also real. It is amazing how many people believe that God is real, and that Heaven is real (based on what they read in the word of God), but also believe that there is no real Satan, and there is no real Hell. They certainly do not believe there is a literal judgment of God. It is impossible to accept the reality of a judgment when you believe that there is no eternal punishment for the disobedient!

Jesus declared that there will be a judgment to separate the righteous from the unrighteous (see Matthew 25:31-46). Paul, as he wrote to the Thessalonian brethren gave them comfort, telling them that God would bring judgment on those who had rejected Him and were persecuting His people:

...and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:7-8).

Understanding the severity and the eternal nature of this judgment should make us take it very seriously. If we minimize the impact of this judgment through jokes that make it appear to be insignificant, we diminish the impact of the inspired teaching. If God's judgment does not frighten us on some level, we will not be inclined to make changes to our lives and obey Him!

As we bring this study to a close, I want to reiterate that it is not bad to enjoy good and clean humor. Nor is it evil to use humor to make a spiritual point or application. I do believe we need to be cautious in how we use humor, so that its impact does not minimize the teachings of scripture. If our approach to things like Hell, judgment, and Satan leave an impression with hearers that those things are either not real or not significant, then we have let humor detract from the message of the gospel. If people walk away from our "jokes" with a diminished view of the seriousness of the battle we fight against evil as Christians, then our humor is destructive, not helpful or instructive. We must view these issues with the seriousness that God intends, so that we approach them daily in a productive manner.

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure (Philippians 2:12-13).

Rejection of God's will is a reason for fear and trembling, not humor and mockery!

The Foundation of Thinking

by: Doy Moyer

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge; fools despise wisdom and instruction” (Proverbs 1:7).

“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (Prov. 9:10).

Any conversations or efforts at communication assume the ability of all involved parties to think, reason, understand, and accurately process information. Without this assumption, any dialogue or writing would be meaningless. Yet, on what grounds do we make such an assumption? Are we justified in assuming that others can think, reason, and understand? Perhaps that sounds rather silly, for, of course, we accept that others can think. Note here that should people say we are not justified in this assumption, they must assume the very thing they are denying. They are assuming that those who hear what they say can think and understand. It would seem to be a vicious circle. We can't argue anything without assuming that people can think about and understand what we are saying. Why is this?

The bigger question is this: where does the ability to think originate? Naturalists—atheists—must assume that this ability is a product of mere mindless, accidental, purposeless brute material forces with no overarching intelligence behind it to guide or intend. Ironically, there would be no purposeful reason to the process of how we gained the ability to think. Since matter is all there is, in the naturalist's view, then thinking is just the result of chemical neurons firing in the grey matter of the head. That ability must have evolved from non-intelligent, unguided processes, and there is nothing else beyond that, and no ultimate meaning to it. There

Study Opportunities

Sunday Bible Study: 10:00 AM
Sunday Worship Assembly: 11:00 AM

Meeting At

Homewood Suites of Bozeman
1023 E Baxter Ln,
Bozeman, MT 59715

Everyone Welcome!

was no ultimate Mind to guide anything.

Consider the consequence of such a position. If there is no ultimate intelligence behind the ability to think and reason, then how can they be sure that they can even think properly? What would give us such confidence that our reasoning abilities give us anything meaningful? If unguided evolution is responsible for thinking, then we have unintelligent, unpurposed mutations to thank for our ability to reason. Yet the question will never go away: how can they be sure that their brains and the thought patterns resulting from natural chemical reactions evolved properly? How can they be sure that they are perceiving the world correctly?

Even some atheistic philosophers can see this. For example, the atheist philosopher Thomas Nagel asks, "Is the [evolutionary] hypothesis really compatible with the continued confidence in reason as a source of knowledge?" His answer is no: "I have to be able to believe ... that I follow the rules of logic because they are correct—not merely because I am biologically programmed to do so." Therefore, he says, "insofar as the evolutionary hypothesis itself depends on reason, it would be self-undermining." (The Last Word, 135-136)

Now contrast the naturalist's view with the biblical view. God is the foundation for it all, and we need to fear Him. He has made us in His image (Gen 1:26-27), given us the ability to think, and made us creatures who can understand and communicate.

Is it all that unreasonable to accept the view that our ability to think and reason comes from an Intelligent Designer? Will we not have a better foundation if we understand that thinking is not just a result of brute natural forces, but rather a result of a God-given ability? Theism bases its arguments on this very point. If there is no God, then there is no foundation for proper thinking—or anything else for that matter. I am not willing to trust the human ability of reason to naturalistic presuppositions, for these concepts face some insurmountable problems.

Knowledge can only be as good as the foundation upon which it rests. Thinking is the result of intelligence, and this does not arise from non-intelligent, non-living material. That would seem to be an axiomatic point, but apparently many do not think so. I would submit, however, that the naturalistic assumption is unbearable. If any of us desire to have confidence in the ability to think and reason, we need to start with God. His existence explains not only the universe, but the mind. Knowledge is grounded in God and our respect for Him.

What is the foundation of your thinking? What do you believe about that foundation?

“The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7).

Fearing God is the beginning of our thinking in the sense of His making us this way, in the sense that He is the foundation for all thinking, and also in the sense of where we should start in our own thinking process. Begin with God. Fear Him because that’s what life is about (Eccl 12:13-14). The fear of the Lord is where any proper thinking starts. We cannot respect that ability while at the same time casting God out of thinking. Instead, we respect the mind God has given us by making Him the front and center of all of our thinking.

“Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth” (Col 3:2).

Brief Exhortations

Compiled by: David Riggs

“Therefore He said: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, ‘Do business till I come.’” (Luke 19:12-13) “As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” (1 Pet. 4:10)

One of Ripley’s “Believe It or Not” items pictures a plain bar of iron worth \$5. The same bar of iron if made into horse shoes would be worth \$50. If it were made into needles, it would be worth \$5,000. If it were made into balance springs for fine Swiss watches, it would be worth \$500,000. The raw material is not as important as how it’s developed.

God has given each of us various talents, and their worth to Him is dependent on how we develop them.

Daily Bible Reading

September 2018

September 3 Zephaniah 3
September 4 Haggai 1
September 5 Haggai 2
September 6 Zechariah 1
September 7 Zechariah 2
September 10 Zechariah 3
September 11 Zechariah 4
September 12 Zechariah 5
September 13 Zechariah 6
September 14 Zechariah 7

September 17 Zechariah 8
September 18 Zechariah 9
September 19 Zechariah 10
September 20 Zechariah 11
September 21 Zechariah 12
September 24 Zechariah 13
September 25 Zechariah 14
September 26 Malachi 1
September 27 Malachi 2
September 28 Malachi 3-4

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