

RICHARD'S FRIGHTENING EXPERIENCE WITH HELL

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Hopelessness.... Real Hopelessness **By Richard Crocker**

It was about sixteen years ago, and my wife Rachel and I were at a Sunday evening service at the Rutland Gospel Tabernacle Church. The pastor had preached a message about the reality of a literal hell. I had heard this same word before from other preachers, yet I listened intently.

The service over, most people were headed for home when I noticed a Christian brother kneeling at the front of the church by himself. I discerned that he was struggling, so I joined him. What happened next is hard to put into words, but I feel I must try. I've got something very important to say and I ask you hear me.

I was suddenly taken into the spiritual realm, into the place of the departed souls, those who had died without receiving Christ as their saviour. God let me feel what they felt. I experienced the agony of eternal separation from God, and it is this sense of eternal hopelessness that I am trying to convey.

The feelings, the emotions of hopelessness I cannot describe. The despair, the agony of separation I cannot fully relate. But I felt them, tasted of them. No, I didn't feel the torment of flames – Jesus spared me that – but a total separation from the One who can save and deliver. And I was made to feel what it's like to have rejected Him and be in the situation of never being able to accept Him. For the opportunity has slipped by. There is no Redeemer in hell.

That life, the life in hell, has no Saviour, no Redeemer. It is this life, life on earth, that has hope. This life has opportunity. This life offers a time to change. Only in this life is there redemption. In this life we set our eternal destinies. In hell there are no choices. The time of decisions is past. One is conscious of one's past life, conscious of what once was, but fully aware that it was now all over. ALL OVER.

In that spiritual encounter I had this sense that I was taken down and I could only look back up with memories of what once was. But I couldn't go back. I no longer had choices. Before, there was

always a chance. I had a Redeemer, even if I rejected Him. At least there was hope. I could always choose Him if I wanted.

But now! There was no Redeemer to save me. Cry as I might, no one would rescue me. I became totally aware that the Redeemer is for life on earth, not life after death. The souls here had no hope. I know that I keep saying those words. No hope. Hopelessness. Oh what grief! Oh what sorrow!

I cried out loud in that church. I screamed. The people who had not yet gone home after the service looked on amazed, not knowing what had happened to me.

And why was this happening? Sermons were fine, but often they don't affect us as they should. God wanted me to know what the lost people felt. He wanted me to experience eternal hopelessness. Perhaps I lacked compassion for the unsaved. It certainly gave me an appreciation of my salvation.

I thank God I have made my peace with Him. I had long ago accepted Jesus Christ as my eternal saviour. I know my sins are forgiven, and my name is written in the Lamb's Book of Life. I have found redemption through His shed blood for my guilt and iniquities. I am not ashamed of being called by His name, and to confess Him as Lord. I so appreciate what He did for me at the cross. He made a way of escape for every one of us.

Hell was something I was casual about. But my experience has forever changed me. What was just words on pages of Holy Scripture I have felt for myself in this experience. But praise God I also have experienced forgiveness and the joy of knowing my destiny is now in God's loving hands. And my future is in heaven with my Redeemer.

But what about you?

I want you to know there is no such word as hopelessness in this life. You may think that you have sinned too much. You may think that you are beyond God's mercy. But you're not. The Bible says, "Whoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

And that's the issue. Christ is the issue. It doesn't matter what you feel – feelings come and feelings go – but rather what you decide. What is your decision? What will you do with Christ?