

Jesus says, **Where their worm does not die, the fire is not quenched** - ought to send chills down your spine. Scare the hell out of you. This is the prophet Isaiah's description of Hell quoted by Jesus. Hell, God's wrath are not make-belief. Nor is it reserved solely for evil people, like Hitler, Stalin, terrorist, pedophiles. It is the place for sinners, the just reward for their works. The place **where the worm does not die, the fire is not quenched**, is the place, for you. Your hand, your foot, your eye, all tainted with sin, and worse - your mind, your personality, your heart.

There's a sound of violence from Jesus words. **Cut off body parts, pluck out eyes**, hyperbole. Beware of the things you do, of the many vices, addictions that draw you into sin. Beware of a conscience that's numb to sin, not troubled by sin. **Cutting off, plucking out** body parts. It's that serious. Jesus is using something precious to you to emphasize His point.

Cease your vain pretending. God isn't fooled. Do you really think He is so impressed with your good intentions, with your good works, that He'll give you a pass for some of your sins? People this is no game. Perhaps you should consider the merits of being without hands, without feet, without eyes for a while, instead of so quick to rationalize, justify your sinful actions. Sin -your biggest problem in life; causes your frustration, your depression, your anger, your tears, your hurt, your sadness, how you hurt those you love. What you deserve is the place where **the worm does not die, the fire not quenched**. Admit it. Confess it. Woe to us.

And here, dear sinner, only here, find rest and wholeness of body and soul. By Divine Intervention alone, you are His little one who believes; weak, helpless but adored by Him. Preciously salty from His sacrifice, to keep you from decay.

At the time of Jesus, Salzburg was settled by the Romans. Salzburg Austria, the city of Mozart, Sound of Music fame. Salzburg means Salt castle/fortress. Salt in the ancient world, throughout the middle ages -worth its weight in gold, called white gold. To prevent food from decaying. Salzburg enjoyed great wealth, affluent. While in Salzburg, I was speaking with a young European tour guide with other Americans, I mentioned we were on a Luther tour. She laughed, "why are you here, this place wasn't kind to Lutherans." I mentioned we're seeing historical sites too. Salzburg, because of prosperity in salty, people had greater literacy, could get printed material, so the Reformation teaching would sprout-up -yet often Lutherans persecuted there, difficult place. In 1731, 30k Lutherans were expelled by the Archbishop from the Salzburg area. They lost everything they had, had to leave - even all lost their children under the age of 12 who were forced to

stay in the city, adopted into other families. Consider God's scriptural truth, doctrine we can at times hold lightly, even giving subtle errors a pass - faithful Christians have been persecuted, lost everything, killed.

Jesus said, **Salt is good**, precious. Sacrifices were salted in the OT. Even the grain offerings salted before they're burned up before the Lord. Salt, a precious thing, offer to God for sins, tied to God's work, salt, preserves, prevents decay.

**Everyone will be salted with fire**, Jesus says. Is that good news or bad? If it's the unquenchable fire of hell -extremely bad news, like disobeying God's word, being turned into a pillar of salt, fire of wrath. If it's fire of the Holy Spirit, then good news. Pentecost fire. Burning bush fire. Gospel purifying-you fire.

Listen to this: **If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in me**. The word, little one, "mikron." Where we get our word "micro." Means very small, babies, not used for older than 2 yrs old. Consider what Jesus is saying, a mikron, a baby has faith, believes in me. How is that? The same as with you, by the power of His Word, by gift in water, the Holy Spirit creating, working faith in you. Jesus says infants can have faith. What assurance for you, faith is not up to you, but receiving and receiving and receiving from His lips, from His pierced hand. To any who would dare think that babies, small children get nothing out of the sermon or Scripture readings, or liturgy -is to deny the power of Jesus words.

Our Lord would have us be salt in this world -against decay of sin. To be truth in a world of lies. To be life in a world of death; light in a world of darkness. To be kindness in a world of cruelty. Be merciful in a world of selfishness. To be love in a world of indifference and hate. You are called to declare His truth in this world, like the truth of no other salvation apart from Him, His truth regarding abortion, human sexuality, marriage, sin.

Confess His holy Word, doctrine, His Sacraments. Those things have been created by, belong to God. They are His. And in those things you are His.

Woe to any who causes you to sin. Woe to any who would dear hurt 1 of my little children, you, declares your Lord. By grace, you enjoy the constant attention of Him who died for you, who keeps you, defends you; you also receive the providence, protection, care of His Father; the empowering gift of faith, true life in the Holy Spirit. Dear little one, the fires of hell cannot touch you, there is no one to condemn you, who, what -even now- can truly harm you, even if you lose everything. He has made a promise to you! He has made a promise to you. For you, the fire quenched from Jesus' side on the cross. You are His micron, own dear child.