

Hell #02: What Does the Bible Teach?

by Edward Donnelly

The Bible teaches that hell is a real place created by God, where the devil, his angels, and those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel will suffer eternal punishment.

Duration: 1:12:36

Scripture: Matthew 11:21, Matthew 25:14-30, Mark 12:38, Luke 12:48, John 3:16, Hebrews 6:1-2, James 3:1

Topics: "Hell"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher addresses the disturbing and alarming statements found in the scripture. He compares it to someone shouting 'Fire!' in a building, causing panic and disturbance. The preacher emphasizes that the purpose of these disturbing statements is not to upset us, but to warn us of the consequences of not obeying the gospel. He explains that hell is a real place of punishment for the devil, his angels, and the unsaved, and that there is no neutral state between heaven and hell. The preacher also highlights the justice of the punishment in hell, which is measured according to each individual's knowledge and privileges.

Transcript

We come this evening to the second of four questions that we wish to consider together as we think of the Bible doctrine of hell. And it is simply this, what does the Bible teach about hell? What does the Bible teach about hell? Some biblical doctrines are extremely complex. They are difficult to grasp.

They are elusive, mysterious, far beyond the reach of our minds. We think, for example, of the doctrine of the Trinity, of the three persons in the one Godhead. We wrestle with that doctrine, and even the mightiest human and believing intellect finds it difficult.

Other doctrines are simple in a sense. The doctrine of the atonement, Christ in the place of sinners, the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. A child can understand that, and many children have believed it to their salvation.

And yet, although simple on the surface, those doctrines have such depths of profundity as to be unfathomable, and to fill us with wonder and amazement. The doctrine of hell is not really in either of these categories. It is not extremely complex.

It is relatively plain and straightforward. We can state it quite simply. One writer defines hell as a place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.

That's plain and straightforward. Again, a child can understand that. A place of eternal conscious punishment for the wicked.

And this is a doctrine which is fortified even by the unregenerate human conscience. All human beings throughout history, or the vast majority, have had a sense of hell. Look at heathen religions.

Islam has a hell. Buddhism has a hell. Hinduism has a hell.

There seems to be something imprinted on the conscience of human beings, made in the image of God, that after this life there is a place of judgment and punishment for those who have done wrong. The doctrine is straightforward. It is easy to grasp.

And it is something that in our inner being we agree with. And the fact that it is denied by so many, and ignored by more, is simply because it is so unwelcome. Not because it's so complex or so unreasonable.

In the New Testament church, the doctrine of hell seems to have been one of the ABCs which was explained and expounded to new converts. In Hebrews chapter 6, the writer is speaking of leaving aside the elementary principles of Christ. He says it's time we moved away from basic doctrines, from teaching for beginners.

And he lifts some of those teachings, the foundation he calls them. He mentions the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. It was a basic, fundamental truth in which every new believer was instructed.

And I almost feel embarrassed to take time over it tonight because it is so plain, and clear, and straightforward. And yet there is value in that. Because it is neglected.

It is overlooked. And there is great value in clarifying our understanding. And I don't propose to give you a complete statement of the biblical doctrine of hell this evening.

What I would like to do is to summarize the main truths in the biblical doctrine of hell under five propositions. And then in the remainder of the time to consider several problems which people have with the biblical doctrine. So let us come first to the biblical doctrine of hell, and five simple propositions which gather together the main aspects of scriptural truth on this topic.

The first is this. Hell is a real place created by God. Hell is a real place created by God.

Many people have heard the statement of the French existentialist philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, no need of brimstone or gridiron, hell is other people. That was his definition of what hell is, the suffering that comes to us by the cruelty of our fellow human beings. John Robinson, infamous a generation ago for his remarkably falsely titled book, *Honest to God*, writes, life can be hell.

That is really what hell is, the dark side of life. People pass through dreadful experiences and they say I have been through hell. They describe their experiences in that way, that is not true.

Hell is a real place. It is not a metaphor, it is not a symbol, it is not a picture, it is not an imaginative way to describe our sorrows or our sufferings, it is not a description of our state of mind, it is a place, it has dimensions, spatial dimensions. We don't know where that place is in God's universe.

The characteristic biblical description is outside, to be cast out, to be into outer darkness, but somewhere, somewhere in God's universe there is a place and that place is hell. In our Lord's parable of the rich man and Lazarus in Luke 16, the rich man talks about this place of torment and it is the normal Greek word for a place, our word topography comes from it, the science of describing places. We are told that Judas Iscariot went to his own place.

The same word, hell is a place. Perhaps the most characteristic name for it in the New Testament is Gehenna, translated in our Bibles as hell. And that word has an interesting history.

It was used of the valley of Hinnom, sometimes called Topheth, a place outside Jerusalem which had a history of horror in Israel. Centuries earlier, God's people had murdered their children in that valley. They had burned them to death in the worship of the Ammonite God, Molech.

It was the place of dread, of cruelty, of foulness, of desolation, of heart-wrenching grief, a place of desecration, a place of devilment. By the first century, it had become a rubbish dump, a garbage dump, a place where offal was burnt day and night. And in the valley of Hinnom, there was smoke, stench, worms, uncleanness, all that was hideous and horrible.

And it is this term which our Lord uses to describe hell. He sees it as a suitable picture or symbol of the real place, hell. And because it's a place, it has been created by God.

We're told in Revelation 4.11 that God created all things, and by his will they exist and were created. And that all things includes hell. Hell was made by God.

He prepared the fire of hell for the devil and his angels. And we'll see the significance of that later. So in the first place, hell is a real place created by God.

Secondly, hell is a place of punishment which is just, terrible, and everlasting. Hell is a place of punishment which is just, terrible, and everlasting. Now is there any more idea, is there any more unpopular idea today in our society than the idea of punishment? It's anathema to modern man.

There should be no punishment in the home. There should be no punishment in the school. There should be no punishment in the state.

Punishment is regarded as barbaric, primitive, unworthy, immoral. People say we don't believe in punishment. And they say that not because they're humane, not because they're kind, not because they're tolerant or advanced or civilized.

They say that because of a frightening dark shadow right at the back of their souls and of their consciousness. The shadow of hell. That voice which says there is punishment.

There is punishment. And that idea so terrifies them that they do everything within their power to remove punishment from their world and their consciousness and their society in the hope that by so doing somehow, because we don't punish, God won't punish. Because we don't believe in punishment, God won't believe in punishment.

It's a childish, pathetic, ostrich mentality. If we say it isn't so, it won't be so. If we hide our head under the bedclothes, the nightmare will go away.

No punishment. But the Bible says that hell is a place of punishment. Matthew 25, 46.

These will go away into everlasting punishment. 2 Thessalonians 1, 9. These shall be punished with everlasting destruction. And if people are willing to accept punishment, isn't it interesting how they want to water it down.

They will have remedial punishment. Punishment that will make people better. Now that's fair enough.

Punishment can be remedial. We trust that when we punish our children, it will be remedial punishment. It will teach them not to do wrong.

It will bring them to a position where we don't have to punish them again. It is remedial punishment. Or there is preventative punishment.

To punish one so that others will fear and avoid that particular wrongdoing. But the punishment in hell is not remedial. It does not make anyone better.

It is not a purgatory. It is of no benefit whatever to those who are being punished. Nor in the absolute sense is the punishment of hell preventative.

Unless to the extent that now to hear of the pains of hell will turn people to Christ. In that sense it is preventative. But when judgment has come.

When the books have been opened. When the final destiny of all has been proclaimed. Then the punishment of hell will not be remedial.

It never was. It will not be preventative. It will be what people hate and fear above all.

Retributive punishment. Punishment purely for wrongdoings sake. Punishment inflicted on the evildoer.

Not to frighten others. Not to teach the evildoer the error of his or her ways. But because it is right that they should be punished.

Because it is just. Because that punishment in itself is a good and righteous thing. Without any benefit whatever accruing to the person who experiences the punishment.

Our society hates and fears the idea of retributive punishment. It brings nightmares to their soul. Hell is a place of punishment.

This punishment is just. It must be just. Because it's carried out by the Lord God Almighty.

And his judgments are true and righteous. And without expanding on it unduly. We can see the justice of the punishment of hell.

Particularly in the way in which the scripture tells us that the punishment in hell will be measured precisely to each individual according to the knowledges and privileges which that individual enjoyed. In Luke 12 verse 47 the Savior says the servant who knew his master's will and did not do according to his will shall be beaten with many strikes. But he who did not know shall be beaten with few strikes.

All will be punished. All will be punished in hell. All will be punished justly.

But all will not be punished to the same degree or to the same extent. All will deserve punishment. But some will deserve more punishment.

And they will be given that more punishment. Precisely measured calculated to their deserts. Christ says for everyone to whom much is given from him much will be required.

And to whom much has been committed of him they will ask the more. Remember his words in Matthew 11 21 when he was speaking to those towns which had heard his preaching and seen his miracles. Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum.

He said woe to you. It will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you. All these cities will be punished.

But some had more privilege. Some had more opportunity. Some had more blessing offered to them.

They will be punished more severely. He speaks regarding the scribes in Mark 12 38. The scribes who are selfish, hypocritical, greedy and dishonest.

These religious leaders who knew the Old Testament from beginning to end. He says these men will receive greater greater condemnation. A solemn word to those of us who are teachers in the church.

You remember James's advice. Don't rush he says into the teaching office. Greater privilege brings greater responsibility.

Now we're not told how this punishment will be graded. We're not told in the Bible if God will inflict greater pain on some individuals than on others. Perhaps it will be a greater awareness of opportunities neglected.

Perhaps it will be a deeper remorse. Perhaps the worm of memory, a father, a mother's prayers will be part of the torture of the damned in hell. The Bible doesn't tell us and we must not speculate.

But what it does tell us is that the punishment in hell will be utterly fair. Just. No one will ever be able to complain.

No one will ever be able to say this is not fair. I have not deserved this. This is more than should be given to me.

Hell is a place of punishment which is just. It is also terrible. We're told that it is a place where there is weeping and gnashing of teeth.

The worm does not die. The fire is not quenched. Those in hell shall drink of the wine of the wrath of God which is poured out full strength into the cup of his indignation and they shall be tormented with fire and brimstone and the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever and they have no rest day or night.

Revelation 14 verses 10 and 11. It is a terrible punishment. It is not a slap on the wrist.

It is something fearsome and it is everlasting in spite of the false claims today made about annihilation. The scripture is abundantly plain. We're told about everlasting destruction, everlasting fire, everlasting punishment.

The same Greek word that is used of everlasting life. The pains of hell are as eternal as the joys of heaven. The same word is used to describe them.

Jude speaks in verse 7 of the vengeance of eternal fire. In verse 13 the blackness of darkness forever. We read in Revelation 20 10 they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

I'm not going to expand on this now. I hope God willing tomorrow evening to speak on the pains of hell. Let us simply note at this point how fearsome this punishment will be.

Just, terrible and everlasting. John Calvin says there can be no doubt but that by such expressions the Holy Spirit intended to confound all our faculties with horror. To confound all our faculties, our minds, our emotions, our wills, everything to be confounded with horror.

Thirdly, hell is for the devil, his angels and the unsaved. Hell is for the devil, his angels and the unsaved. George Bernard Shaw the Irish playwright commented flippantly and blasphemously that all the interesting people will be in hell.

That's not what the Bible says. Christ speaks of the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels. The devil we're told was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.

The demons cowered before Jesus of Nazareth. What have we to do with you? Did you come to destroy us? Mark 1 24. Luke 8 31 they begged him that he would not command them to go out into the abyss.

They knew the place for which they were destined. Jude verse 6 we're told of the evil spirits who rebelled in heaven. That God has reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Hell is for the devil and for his angels. That is their place. It is also for the notoriously wicked.

In Revelation 21 verse 8 we read that the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone. These are George Bernard Shaw's interesting people. The abominable murderers, immoral, idolaters and liars.

These wicked people, these evil people will be cast into hell. But hell is also for those who are outwardly moral and decent, upright and respectable who have never trusted Christ as their savior. Paul describes them in 2nd Thessalonians 1 8. He says that God will take vengeance in flaming fire on whom? The Hitlers? The Stalins? Who are these people on whom God will take vengeance in flaming fire? What monsters of depravity are they? Paul says those who do not know God and who do not obey the gospel.

Some of you tonight are refusing to obey the gospel. Simple as that. You say that's all I've done.

I've never done anything really bad. But you're not obeying the gospel. The gospel says believe on the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you're not doing that. You're not obeying the gospel. The bible says that God will take vengeance in flaming fire upon you if you never did another bad action as long as you lived, but if you didn't obey the gospel.

He who does not believe the Son shall not see life but the wrath of God abides on him. The only human beings who will escape hell are the elect, Christ's people. He who hears my word and believes in him who sent me has everlasting life and shall not come into condemnation but is passed from death into life.

Hell is for the devil, his angels and the unsaved. Fourthly, hell is where the souls of the wicked go at death and where their bodies are rejoind with their souls at the last judgment. Hell is where the souls of the wicked go at death and where their bodies are reunited with their souls at the last judgment.

In other words, there is no neutral place in the universe between heaven and hell. There is no third state. There is no waiting room until the second coming of Christ.

There is no such thing as soul sleep or a period of unconsciousness or oblivion. There is only this life, this world, and then heaven or hell. We know that when the believer dies, his or her soul goes immediately to be with Christ.

The Westminster short ecstasticism puts it beautifully. The souls of believers are at their death made perfect in holiness and do immediately pass into glory and their bodies being still united to Christ do rest in their graves till the resurrection. Christ said to the dying thief, today you will be with me in paradise.

Paul wanted to depart and to be with Christ which is far better. That's what happens to the believer at death. And conversely, as the unbeliever dies, there is a gloating whisper from the devil, today you will be with me in hell.

Those are the only two voices. You will be with Christ or you will be with Satan. The 1689 Baptist confession of faith puts it this way.

After death, the souls of the wicked are cast into hell where they remain in torment and utter darkness reserved to the judgment of the great day. I think some confusion has arisen in people's minds because the Old Testament word Sheol and the New Testament word Hades are used in scripture with different meanings. Sometimes they refer to the grave to which we all go.

Sometimes they refer to the place of punishment to which believers do not go. So sometimes you will see a statement in the Bible, I will go to Sheol. Sometimes you will see a statement, I will not go to Sheol.

And that has confused people. And they said, what is this Sheol? Is it an intermediate state? But the words are being used in different senses there. And though the scripture has far more to say about the immediate destiny of believers, its teaching is quite plain regarding those who die without Christ.

Perhaps clearest of all in the Lord's parable of the rich man of Lazarus. That is clearly referring to the intermediate state. The rich man has five brothers.

They are still alive. They are on the earth. The end of the world has not come.

The Lord has not returned. He has died but his brothers have not died. They have still opportunity to repent and believe.

And what are we told about this man who has died before the general resurrection? We are told in Luke 16.23, the rich man died and was buried and being in torment in Hades, he lifted up his eyes. His body was in the ground. His body was going into corruption but his soul was in torment.

I am tormented they said in this flame. Again 2 Peter 2.9, the Lord knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations and to reserve the unjust under punishment for the day of judgment. Literally in Greek, to keep the unrighteous continually being punished till the day of judgment.

Even now they are being punished. There is no such place as purgatory. There is no second chance.

There is no future hope. There is no point in praying for the dead. They are beyond our prayers.

Our prayers cannot help them. We may say it reverently, even almighty God himself will not help them. That is the urgency of the gospel.

That is why God says believe today. For once you die, it is too late. You cannot pay for masses to be said.

You cannot give all your possessions to bring your beloved out of some purgatory. They are lost. They are gone forever.

They await the general resurrection, the day of judgment when our Lord returns. When the souls and bodies of believers are reunited and pass into glory. When the souls of wicked are reunited with their bodies and consigned to hell forever.

And then fifthly and lastly in this section of our study, we can say that the Bible teaches that hell is ruled by God and exists for his glory. Hell is first of all ruled by God. Now we need to stress that because there is a popular idea in people's minds that hell is somehow outside God's presence and God's reach and God's power.

That it is some sort of garbage dump, some sort of repository for nuclear waste where God puts everyone in and seals it and buries it and puts it away and forgets about it. And they just govern their own affairs in that dreadful place of torment. It is a community beyond God's reach people think.

Perhaps John Milton is partly to blame for that. Some of you may know his great poem Paradise Lost. And in that poem he gives a great deal of attention to Satan, the chief angel.

And here is what Satan says according to Milton, the great Puritan that he was, as he is about to enter hell. The devil says, here at least we shall be free. Here we may reign secure and in my choice to reign is worth ambition though in hell.

Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. You see that was Milton's understanding of Satan. Now perhaps that is what Satan thought.

Perhaps that is what he hoped for. Better to reign in hell than serve in heaven. I may be wretched but I'll be my own master.

I may be miserable but at least I'll have got away from God. Even John Gerstner, great theologian, writes in one of his works, hell is where Satan rules. My friends that is not true.

Hell is where God rules, where God alone rules. It is not a demonic colony which is declared unilateral independence. Jesus says, fear him who has power to cast into hell.

That is God, the ruler of hell. He has prepared the fires of hell. The everlasting torment we are told in Revelation 14.10 is in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.

What an awful and mysterious statement. We'll come back to it again tomorrow evening. The devil does not reign in hell.

The devil suffers the worst punishment in hell. And there is a danger you see of making the devil into a sort of a James Dean type figure. A sort of a tragic heroic rebel.

The outsider, the man who stands by himself and shakes his fist at God. Let me quote Milton again. Here is Satan speaking.

What though the field be lost, all is not lost. The unconquerable will, the courage never to submit or yield. God's glory never shall his wrath and might extort from me to bow and sue for grace with suppliant knee and deify his power.

That were an ignominy and shame beneath this downfall. Satan says, I have never kneeled to God, but at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow. Of those in heaven and those on earth and those under the earth and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Satan will be a whipped, crawling, cowering cur in hell. He'll not be a dark prince. He'll not be a majestic Lord, magnificent in his evil.

No, he'll be a contemptible thing. He'll be a worm. He'll be a miserable, pathetic object cowering down before the mighty King and Lord of all.

God rules in hell as he rules in heaven. It will not take time to develop it, but hell is also for God's glory. I want to come back to that.

Properly understood, it is not an embarrassment. It is not something we regret. It's not something we speak about in whispers.

It's not something we're hesitant or reluctant about. In hell, and I say it, I trust reverently and tremblingly, in hell the glory of God will be unveiled in a new and amazing way. More of God's authority will be seen than has ever been seen before.

God's holiness, God's justice, God's anger will be revealed in hell. And he will be glorified through hell. It's significant that the holy ones in the book of Revelation praise God for hell and thank him for hell.

It's not a fearsome thought. Revelation 11, 17, the 24 elders, we give you thanks, O Lord God Almighty, because you have taken your great power and reigned the nations where angry and your wrath has come. At the time of the dead, that they should be judged, thank you Lord.

Revelation 16, 5, the angel of the waters, you are righteous, O Lord, because you have judged these things and you have given them blood to drink, for it is their just due. Like everything else, hell exists for God's glory. So that's a brief, a very brief and inadequate outline of some of the major themes in the biblical doctrine of hell.

But I would like, for the remainder of the time, to turn comparatively briefly to two problems with the biblical doctrine. And these are the result of mistaken thinking, but we're not talking about arrogance, we're not talking about unbelief, we're not talking about a weak evasion of scriptural truth, we're talking about genuine problems which godly people sometimes have. Issues with which they wrestle, which are a problem and a difficulty to them and we want to try to help them with them if we can.

The first one is this, is hell not a punishment which is disproportionate to the offense? Is hell not a punishment which is disproportionate to the offense? In its severity and its duration, is it not a fearsome

thing that human beings should be tormented so unbelievably, horribly and dreadfully, forever and forever and forever and forever. Even the best of us, even the most knowledgeable of us from time to time may have wondered, is it just? Is it terrible? Is it unfair that such an awful punishment forever should be inflicted on human beings? What can we say? Let us make several brief points. The first is that we have no concept of the horror and guilt of sin.

Even the best, even the holiest, even the most godly of believers has little idea of what a foul and ghastly thing sin is. Charles Hodge says, we are incompetent judges of the penalty which sin deserves. We have no adequate apprehension of its inherent guilt of the dignity of the person against whom it is committed, of the extent of the evil which it is capable of producing.

A mortal being sets his or her will against the creator. We arrogantly reject the authority of the God who made us. We refuse to fall down and worship.

You see, the gravity of the offense depends on the dignity of the being which is injured by the offense. If we were to go out this evening and see a small child tromping on a worm or pulling a worm to pieces, we would be annoyed. We would say, don't do that, that's a creature of God.

Unless of course the worm was in an inconvenient place. But we would say, well that's something you shouldn't do. Don't be cruel even to the insects.

But we wouldn't be appalled by it. We wouldn't say, you evil wicked little boy, how could you do such a dreadful thing? We wouldn't lie sleepless all night to think of that child torturing that worm. If a child was torturing a cat, it would not be worse.

We would think that really was cruel. That was perverse. Because in our scale of understanding, a cat we think is a nobler animal than a worm.

Or if it was torturing a human being, now that would shake us. That would fill us with horror. That is a truly dreadful thing.

It's the same action in every case. But it's against a different creature, a different being. And it is that which gives it its guilt.

To pull a worm in two is not as bad as pulling a human being in two. But what then must be an offense against God? Who is so much above all other creatures, all creatures? For He is the Creator, the Uncreated. Nor has the guilt of a sin any connection with its duration.

You could murder someone in a second. It could take you ten years to defraud someone of their life's savings. One crime is committed in a second.

The other crime takes ten years. Does the longer sin require a longer punishment? No. It bears no relationship.

People say, why should I be tormented forever for a sin which only takes a few moments? That's irrelevant. That has nothing to do with the guilt of the sin. People don't understand the heinousness of sin.

Our society is numb with regard to sin. I wonder, do any of you smoke tobacco? I hope you don't. I think if you do, you're very foolish.

You're injuring your body. You're breaking the sixth commandment. I'm not making a plea for the smoking of cigarettes.

But isn't it strange? The persecuting mania which our society has against people who smoke tobacco. They're banned. They're banished.

They're frowned on. They are the lepers of society. There are notices up.

You could be put out of a restaurant. That is one of the worst things you could do to smoke tobacco. Abortion fine.

Perversion fine. You name it. But don't you dare to light a cigarette in my presence.

You see, people's values are all skewed. They don't know right and wrong. They don't know great evil and small evil.

We're not in a position to say what's terribly bad. Only the Bible can help us. Hasn't it been interesting recently to hear people talking about capital punishment? People said, oh I don't agree with capital punishment.

Oh no, it's cruel. It's terrible. To put another human being to death.

And then after Oklahoma City. Oh, that's a different thing. Such a crime as that.

Such a heinous thing. All those lives taken away. The man who does that deserves punishment.

Normally I don't agree with it. But when it's something really bad, then of course. But that's the point.

Sin is really bad. Sin is the worst thing imaginable. That's why we cannot say that it's unfair.

Oh, we remember again that those who are in hell continue to sin. They keep on sinning and incurring more guilt forever and forever and forever. In Revelation 22.11 we have the solemn statement, he who is unjust, let him be unjust still.

He who is filthy, let him be filthy still. I owe many debts to you Reformed Baptist friends. And one of the not inconsiderable debts I owe you is introducing me to the writings of John Ledley Dagg.

And he's a manual of systematic theology. In today's world it's a very unimpressive looking book. There is no bibliography.

There are no learned footnotes. It just looks very simple and straight forward. But if you haven't got that book, get it and read it.

Use it in your private devotions. He has a most marvelous, simple, warm, practical way of teaching us theology. Here's what Dagg has to say.

A sinner cannot become innocent by being confirmed in sin. The future condition of the wicked is chiefly terrible because they are abandoned by God to the full exercise and influence of their unholy passions and consequent accumulation of guilt forever and ever. In other words, in hell they become more guilty and more guilty and more guilty forever and forever and forever.

And after millions and millions of ages they have just accumulated more sin to be punished. They don't become innocent by being confirmed in sin. The cross of Christ shows us the seriousness of sin.

Listen to Dagg again. If wrath and damnation had been trivial things, the sending of God's only Son into the world, the laying of our sins upon Him, and the whole expedient adopted to deliver us from these inconsiderable evils, we would have been unworthy of infinite worship. Sin is such a trivial thing, such a small matter.

What a waste to shed the blood of God's only begotten Son to atone for it. Dagg goes on. The power of God's anger, finite intelligence cannot conceive, but God understands it well.

And the full estimate of it was regarded in the deep counsels which devise the scheme of salvation. William Shedd says, It is incredible that the eternal Trinity should have submitted to such a stupendous self-sacrifice to remove a merely finite and temporal evil. And he goes on to make an exceedingly profound statement.

The doctrine of Christ's vicarious atonement stands or falls with eternal. If we lose this, he said, we lose the cross. Isn't that awesome? Would not be another reason that we could have thought of last night.

If we lose hell, sooner or later we lose the cross. There is no point to the cross. No reason for it.

Jesus didn't need to come and do all that. He stand or fall together. Hell is extreme, but that is because sin is extreme.

Are we going to stand at the foot of the cross and tell God that hell is an inappropriate punishment? But then another question, a problem. Is hell not contrary to the character of God? Is hell not contrary to the character of God? God is love. God delights in mercy.

How then can a loving God bear to send some of his creatures to everlasting torment? That is one of John Stott's difficulties. How can a loving God bear to send some of his creatures to everlasting torment? Would you do it to a child? You who are human beings, would you send a child? Would you do it to a dog? Of course you wouldn't. You wouldn't put a dog in the flames of hell forever.

I wouldn't. You wouldn't. How can God do it? Isn't he a God of love? What can we say? Let me give several strands of argument to you.

We'd want to say first of all that God's attributes do not oppose each other. They do not fight against each other. One does not override the others.

They're not at war, there's not a battle between them. God is loving and he's merciful, but he's also holy. And he's also righteous of purer eyes than to behold evil.

And all his attributes are exercised in the fullness of their perfection. And none of them can be cancelled. For that would mean that God was denying himself.

And that is what he will never do. It is right for God to hate sin. You would agree with that.

And it is right for him to hate sin with an infinite hatred. And that infinite hatred is good. We'd agree with that.

It's good that he should hate sin. Well if it is good, should it not be expressed? Is it not right for God to express what is good? He expresses his love. He expresses his holiness.

He expresses his wrath. He expresses his justice. Are we going to question that? Are we going to say that God should stump himself and cripple himself and give us a partial picture of his glory? Or again, we could ask, would indifference to sin be a virtue? Would indifference to sin be a virtue? Do we admire people who have no moral sense? When the citizens of a great nation are asked in a poll Do you believe that the rumors regarding the morality of a politician who is running for chief office in that nation Do you believe that those rumors have foundation?

And over 70% of the citizens of that nation whose identity you can probably guess over 70% of the citizens say Yes, we do believe that those rumors have foundation and are probably true And they're then asked Would that affect the way you vote in any way? And they say, not in the least We believe the man has probably done these things We believe the rumors are true Nevertheless, we intend to give him our support Is that a sign of health in a nation? It would be healthier if they believed the rumors were false At least they'd be acting out of some conviction Indifference to sin, is that a virtue?

If someone was willing to be poly with a multiple unrepentant child murderer And say, well I just like to be friendly with people I like to get on with people, you know I'm a good natured sort of a person Would you say, what a wonderful guy that is? Oh, what a big heart What an admirable man No, you wouldn't You would say, where's his thinking gone? R.L. Dabney gives a powerful illustration from life of two people he knew A woman, a godly, saintly woman Who trusted the Lord, who lived a life of holiness and love Who was plagued by pain and illness All her days, and died in agony And a wicked wretch Profligate, immoral, cruel Who had taken human life Who spent his days in health and happiness And was taken from this world suddenly Without an ache or pain And Dabney says, let us suppose That these two persons Appearing so nearly at the same time In the presence of God Were together introduced To the same heaven If this is God's justice Then he is more fearful Than the prince of darkness To believe that our everlasting destiny Is in the hands of such unprincipled omnipotence Is more horrible Than to dwell in the crust of a volcano What sort of God would he be?

He would be the devil He would be the devil If God could look at sin and say It doesn't matter Never worry, come into heaven He would be the devil Or again we could say The objection proves too much People say how can a God of love Inflict endless misery On his creatures But we could equally ask How can a God of love Inflict any misery on his creatures But he does The world is full of misery And unhappiness It's quite clear that God judges sin He has done since the fall In Eden One writer says his judgments Are frequent enough To let us know he judges But seldom enough To let us know that there must be Judgment to come Frequent enough To show us that he judges Seldom enough To point to a judgment to come This argument would also mean That mercy Is compulsory Pastor Hendricks wouldn't need

To preach to us on the grace of God Because there wouldn't be any Grace of God If God is bound to forgive If his love Requires him To show mercy And to receive into heaven Then there is No grace Then we are not indebted to him In any way at all He is so controlled by His love that he cannot Punish That he must forgive That the cross is a supreme Irrelevance And nonsense That redemption is not of grace It is the fulfilment of Obligation You have to throw away Your Bibles If a God of love Cannot send to hell Then what does John 3 16 mean And of course most of all How can God Be merciful And condemn to hell But my friends the truth is That there is mercy There is mercy In Christ God demonstrates His own love toward us In that while we were still sinners Christ died for us Now tell me this

How is it reasonable For people to hear of the love of God And be pleaded with To accept the love of God And turn their backs On the love of God And reject and refuse the love of God And then complain That God is not loving He is loving But they don't want His love They spurn it They despise it They trample upon it And then they have the sheer Gall to criticise Him To stand at the foot of Calvary On which His only begotten Son bled and died And say Oh well I've got doubts About God's love One of those theologians could speak of it last night As profoundly immoral How How can any man Dare to say In the light of the cross of Christ That God is unloving Do you remember those words That must have cut our Saviour's soul That night in the boat On the sea of Galilee Lord do you not care That we

perish I wonder did Jesus think to Himself Oh my friend If you knew What your words mean Why am I here No God is the Father of our Saviour And to suggest in any way That the existence of hell Is contrary to His love Is blasphemy I want to take a few minutes in closing To say just a word or two About the purpose Of the biblical doctrine We've looked at it in summary We've considered one or two objections Now then what is its purpose Why is it given In the scripture It is horrible It's alarming It's disturbing It's frightening Why has God put these Very very disturbing Awful statements In His word Why does He upset us so Let me suggest that That is not the key issue Supposing tonight About 3 or 4 am Someone were to run down The corridor Of the building where you're staying You're peacefully

asleep You're tired after a busy day And suddenly someone runs Down the corridor shouting FIRE FIRE The building is in flames Awake Escaped for your life And you jump out of bed And you're sleepy And you bang your leg on the chair And it's sore And the children are frightened And crying And you feel sick And you rush out into the corridor That's a very upsetting statement It's very disturbing And annoying But what would be the reality If there is no fire That's a piece of irresponsible Foolishness But if there is a fire That is an act of love And kindness The issue is not the loud voice The inconvenient hour The frightening words The upset to yourself And your children The issue is this Is it true Or is it false And if it's true Then the louder and more Upsetting it is The better And you

see people criticise the bible All this language Bloodthirsty, upsetting You have passages you couldn't read to children They have nightmares Why has God put all this Into his words That's not the issue The issue is, is there a hell Or is there not And if there is And there is Then surely This is an act of supreme kindness Supposing the bible Had told us nothing of hell Supposing it had satisfied The modernists and the liberals And there wasn't a single word in this book About any condemnation to come Would that be a loving thing I was speaking To someone at lunch today Who serves God working in the hospice movement She was telling me That the holy thought of the movement is Don't alarm the dying Don't cause them any anxiety Or worry Assure them that they are going to a better place All

will be well Nothing to trouble them Let them slip out of this world Easily and comfortably We want to be kind We want to be caring That's not kind That's not caring That's dreadfully dreadfully cruel And people you see complain That God warns us But it's in his love he warns us It's in his grace he warns us Because hell is a reality And it's in love That we've chosen this topic For this conference For those of you who are on your way to hell This morning Jesus was described As the theologian of hell We sometimes overlook The point of that We say well hell must be true For Christ taught it That's correct We say hell is not inconsistent With God's love For Christ taught it That's correct But what is the chief point The chief point is that he who tells us About hell Is the one who can save

us from hell He who brings us The warning Is the one who can help us That's the beauty of it And the grace of it What more Could we ask The very person Whom God sends to warn us He himself Is the

person who can deliver us He brings the warning And the deliverance Together Some of you here today Are unconverted You've heard about hell Many times And you're resisting it And I warn you now That if you continue In your unbelief You will end up in that dreadful place And those of us here who are Christians Will witness against you At the day of judgment On Friday my wife and I hope to be driving Off on holiday for a few weeks Courtesy of some of the friends here And I'm driving Let's say along the highway Driving at 70 miles an hour I won't be but let's assume I were And a highway patrolman

Pulls me over and he says Sir the speed limit in this state is 65 You're breaking the law And I would say Well I'm sorry officer I didn't know I wasn't aware I'm a visitor here And he would say well you should have known It was your business to know You could have found out I'm going to have to fine you But he would be lenient I think I think he would be understanding And if he had to give me a penalty He would do it with a smile I would hope And a degree of graciousness I didn't know But supposing that Same officer stops me again An hour later And I'm still driving at 70 miles an hour He's going to have a different Attitude then he says Sir I spoke to you about this I warned you I explained the position His whole attitude towards me is going to be changed And many of you Have heard of

hell Again and again and again And again What will you say What will you say young people When you stand before God God says you were warned You were told You were urged To flee the wrath to come But you trampled The son of God Under your feet You insulted the spirit of grace You will be damned And you will deserve to flee The wrath to come Let us pray Thank you Father For warning us So clearly Movingly Powerfully And repeatedly Thank you Lord For sending that warning Chiefly Through the Savior Himself Who came Full of grace And mercy And life That the warning was brought To us By the one who delivers from it Lord our God Thank you that Christ Stands in our midst this evening By His Spirit And warns us each one again Of hell And offers Himself To be our Savior Lord if there is someone

here now Resisting you Fighting against you Longing for this Meeting to be over Shuffling in their seat Trying to think of something else Lord break through Their indifference Terrify them Overwhelm them oh God Help them to realize That it is the voice of the Son of God Who is truth Calling on them Warning them And grant that by your mercy They may take heed And be saved We pray in Jesus name Amen

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