

Hell #03: What Will It Be Like?

by Edward Donnelly

Hell will be a place of absolute poverty, agonizing pain, an angry presence, and an appalling prospect, where the reality is always more than the symbol.

Duration: 1:08:33

Scripture: Matthew 7:21, Matthew 13:42, Matthew 19:24, Matthew 25:41, Luke 16:23-24, Luke 16:28

Topics: "Hell"

Description

In this sermon, the minister discusses the topic of hell and its implications. He emphasizes that hell is a state of absolute poverty, agonizing pain, an angry presence, and an appalling prospect. The minister highlights that all the good things in life, such as love, friendships, art, and physical well-being, will be taken away in hell. He quotes Jonathan Edwards, a renowned preacher, to emphasize the severity and indescribable nature of eternal torment. The sermon is directed towards those who are still unconverted, urging them to call on Christ and trust in him to avoid experiencing the horrors of hell.

Transcript

We come this evening to the third of four questions that we want to consider together regarding the biblical doctrine of hell. The question before us this evening is, what will hell be like? What will hell be like? It is a most awful subject. I do approach it with a great deal of reluctance and even dread.

I am aware of the dangers, the danger of hurting many beloved brothers and sisters here who have loved ones who died without Christ. And I know that for you this may be an intensely painful experience and I am reluctant to inflict pain. There is the danger of speaking in an insensitive, crass and ugly way as sadly is sometimes done.

It would be much, much easier not to think of this subject. But friends, we must deal with it. We must think about it.

Because it has been revealed to us clearly and extensively in scripture as we have seen and most of all by the Lord Jesus himself. We dare not adopt a pious pretense that we are so refined, so delicate, so sensitive that we could not stoop to consider such a doctrine. For that would be to cast aspersions on our blessed Savior.

We are not more sensitive than he was. We are not more tender of the sensibilities of God's people than he was. And yet he spoke so clearly and graphically about what it will be like to be in hell.

The safeguard to which I hope to cling is to stick as far as I can to the teaching of scripture, the words of scripture, the concept of scripture. To try to rein in my imagination, to keep a grip on myself that I or we do not go beyond what the word of God actually says. We seek simply to look at the language of scripture, what does scripture tell us about what hell will be like.

This may raise a question in the mind of some. People are inclined to say sometimes, is the language of scripture not symbolical? We are not meant to take it literally. It is figurative.

It is metaphorical. It is a poetic description of the reality of hell. And we would agree with that to some extent.

Much of the language of scripture is symbolical. Although some of it is to be taken absolutely literally, there are some of the statements about hell which we do not understand with crass, wooden literalness. We are told that the devil is cast into the flames.

The devil is a spirit. He does not have a body. So whatever the flames may mean, we cannot restrict them to literal flames.

The reality of hell is so far beyond our experience that language simply cannot describe it comprehensively. That is true really of most things in life. How could you describe the taste of your favorite food? How could you put it into words? You couldn't.

How could you describe what it means to love someone? The poets and the novelists of the centuries have tried. And they have all come far short. Words are not enough.

John Calvin says that. He says these forms of speech denote in a manner suited to our feeble capacity a dreadful torment which no language can express. We are quite happy to think of the language of scripture to a great extent as symbolical.

And yet, and yet, many people today will take that admission to imply that there is no objective reality behind these symbols, behind these pictures in the word. They will say to us, these terrible expressions are just symbols. They are pictures.

They are not to be taken literally. Hell is not like this at all. This is just a symbolic representation of it.

But friends that is a complete misunderstanding of what a symbol is. A symbol or a sign by its very nature is always less than the reality. The reality is always more.

In Britain we are driving along the road and we see a sign at the roadside and on that sign are two or three small children crossing the road. That is a roadside school. Is that an adequate description of the school? No it is not.

But the school that exists around the corner is much more than the sign. It is not less than the sign. We come to the Lord's table and we eat the bread.

And that is a sign and seal of the Lord Jesus Christ. But he is much more than the symbol. It is a fine symbol.

It speaks of life. It speaks of receiving. It speaks of eating by faith.

But he is more than the symbol. So there is no comfort to say this language is symbolic. That doesn't let us off the hook.

That doesn't make hell any less dreadful. It simply alerts us to the fact that the reality is infinitely worse than the worst of the symbols. This evening we want to try to imagine what it will be like to be in hell.

And I am aiming what I have to say very directly and specifically to those people in our midst tonight who are still unconverted. For it concerns you most urgently and directly and if you do not call on Christ and trust in him you will go to this place and you will not have to imagine what it will be like in hell. For you will experience what we will be thinking of this evening.

On the 8th of July 1741 Jonathan Edwards is preaching in the small town of Enfield, Massachusetts. His famous sermon, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God. And as he preached the Holy Spirit came upon the people.

And one onlooker said the minister was obliged to desist. The shrieks and the cries of the congregation were piercing and amazing. The people started crying out in their anguish and their despair.

What must I do to be saved? Tonight we have been praying that God the Holy Spirit will work on you tonight. That this will be the night of your salvation. That this will be the night when Christ Jesus delivers you from hell.

And you will look back on this night forevermore to all eternity and say then and there in that place Jesus saved me from hell. And we who are God's people will gladly bear the pain of considering this subject. If only God will be pleased to save you.

I want to summarize the Bible's teaching under four headings. And as it happens we have alliteration here. We will be considering hell as absolute poverty, agonizing pain, an angry presence and an appalling prospect.

What will it be like to be in hell? In the first place there will be absolute poverty. And to make our message flow with more impact tonight I am going to depart from my normal practice of giving a reference for every statement from scripture. I am not speaking tonight so much for Christians who want to have a comprehensive set of notes.

I want to be more personal, more immediate than that. You can find these references. You can look them up.

I want the word of God to have its direct impact. Hell is a place of absolute poverty. It is clear that hell is a place of separation from God.

Christ will say depart from me you cursed. He will say of the wicked I never knew you. Depart from me, leave me.

Go far away. Paul says that the lost shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord. Banished in that sense from the presence of the Lord.

Hell is a place of separation from God. Perhaps that is why it is so often referred to as a place of darkness. God is light and in him is no darkness at all.

But the sons of a kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. If you go to hell you will be separated from God. Now some of you may not be troubled at that point.

Some of you may say so what? Big deal. I am quite contempt to be separated from God. I am contempt now living without God.

In fact I would be relieved to be free of God. I would be relieved to be away from his presence. It would be a burden off my conscience.

The thought of God troubles me. And the fact of separation from God would be good news. Many think that.

But even if we were to leave God himself out of the picture. Even if we were to neglect the fact that you will be separated from his mercy and his salvation and his son. My dear unconverted friends let me say to you.

You have no idea what you are saying. You say to me I am living without God. No you are not living without God.

You are not living without God. You are surrounded and sustained at every moment of your existence by the goodness and the kindness and the provision and the bounty of a merciful creator. He causes his sun to shine on the evil and the good and sends his rain on the just and the unjust.

You feel the warmth and the beauty of the sunlight on your face. And the cool refreshing breeze on your cheek. Those are God's gifts.

You enjoy the crusty taste of fresh bread. The juice of a ripe peach. The coolness of a drink on a hot day.

Those are God's gifts. You perhaps know what it is to love someone. To have your heart drawn out to them in affection.

You have friends. Those are God's gifts. Perhaps your spirit has been enriched by art and literature and music.

Those are God's gifts to you. Some of you this afternoon have enjoyed the exhilaration of sport, of bodily exercise and afterwards of physical well-being. Feeling life coursing through your veins.

As a strong man rejoices to run his race. Those are God's gifts. You have ambitions in life and goals.

You find satisfaction in projects and work. Those are God's gifts. You laugh and rejoice and experience happiness and rest.

You lie down in bed at night and sleep. Those are God's gifts. And friends in hell, all these will be taken from you.

All these will be taken from you. You're not living without God. You're indebted to God for everything that makes your life bearable and worthwhile.

It's all from God. And to be separated from God is not just to be separated from that, from himself, it's to be separated from God. You don't appreciate them.

You don't thank the giver. But when they're all taken away, what poverty. More than that, hell is a place where your personality will endlessly deteriorate.

And all the dignity that you now have as an image bearer of God, all your value, all your humanity will be stripped from you. The key New Testament word here is destruction or perishing. That does not mean annihilation.

It means the ruin of all that is worthwhile. Something is ruined so that it is useless for its intended purpose. We speak of a piece of rubber as having perished.

The elasticity is gone. The strength is gone. It is whitened and crumbly and friable and useless.

It looks like rubber but what made it of value, what gave it its identity, has perished. And this is the word that our Bible uses. This is what perishing is.

It means that you as a being will become ever more degraded. You will become more contemptible, more loathsome, more horrible, more lonely. You will be surrounded by devils and wicked men.

They will hate you and you will hate them. Everything in you that is bad will be let loose. Everything in you that is good will be taken away.

All your most evil, wicked passions will burn and increase and consume you until you become utterly, utterly foul. You will be raised to dishonor, increasing dishonor. That will be your existence.

What a wretched existence it will be. Nothing good, nothing beautiful, nothing joyful, nothing worthwhile. A horrible, grey, monotone, dreariness.

Unenlivened by a single ray of light or joy. As you fester and stew in your loathsomeness, that is what will happen to you. Think of the most hopeless, derelict you have ever seen in the gutter.

His existence is paradise compared to the poverty, the poverty, poverty of hell. Absolute, but there is something far, far worse. Agonizing pain.

Agonizing pain. One of the most common expressions in the Bible about hell is fire. Whoever says you fool shall be in danger of hell fire.

It is better to enter into life lame or maimed than to be cast into the everlasting fire. The wicked shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire. Hell is a place of fire.

Why has God chosen that word fire to describe hell? We will come back to it later. But one thing that it speaks of is pain. Pain.

The claim is often made today that fire speaks of annihilation. That is Dr. Stock's assertion. He speaks of hell as an incinerator.

He says the purpose of the incinerator is to destroy, to annihilate, to reduce to nothingness that which is put into the fire. And argues that when the Bible speaks of everlasting fire it speaks of annihilation. But the reverse is the case.

It is quite clear that fire speaks of conscious, agonizing suffering. The rich man in the parable we are told was in torment in Hades and he asked for a drop of water on his tongue for he said I am tormented in this flame. It was not annihilation.

It was for the purpose of causing pain. In the book of Revelation we are told of the idolater. He shall be tormented with fire and brimstone.

And the word used is the regular word in Greek for torturing. Fire tortures. It causes the most exquisite and intense agony.

Think of the pain of even the smallest burn. 20 or 30 years ago I don't know if it is still the case. It was the sort of test of a real macho man that he could hold a flame of a match in his hand.

There was a figure some of you will remember called Gordon Liddy and his claim was that he could hold a lighted match against the palm of his hand. This showed his toughness, his manhood, his courage. He could bear a little tiny flame for a few seconds on the palm of his hand.

My friends what must it be like to be cast into the flames body and soul forever. I don't know what that means. I don't know what it means.

I can't imagine what it will mean for the resurrected bodies of the damned. But we can be sure of this that at the very least it means excruciating agony. That's why the words are chosen.

It will be a hideous counterpart of the bush of which we read in Exodus. The bush burned with fire but the bush was not consumed. And the wicked will burn with fire but they will not be consumed.

Agonizing, agonizing in hell. You my unconverted friend will be in agonizing pain. Our Lord uses another horrible expression.

He speaks in Mark 9 verse 46 of the worm which does not die and the fire which is not quenched. He is quoting the last verse of the book of Isaiah. The prophet has been speaking of a new heavens and a new earth.

God gathers together a great multitude of people from all nations to worship him in his temple. And as the worshipers leave the temple Isaiah says they shall go forth and look upon the corpses of the men who have transgressed against me where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched. The Jews were so appalled by that passage that in their public synagogue reading they did a very unusual and a very Jewish thing.

They transposed verses 23 and 24 of Isaiah chapter 66 so that the reading would not end with that terrible 24th verse. And in the Jewish synagogues they were very reluctant to tamper with the word of God in any way. But they ended with the previous verse which speaks of worship and glory for God.

In ancient times it was a great disgrace for a corpse not to be buried. The two things that you could do to your enemy were the worst things were either to burn his body or to leave it to rot. And those were dreadful things.

But at least when the fire had used up its fuel it went out. At least when the maggots had stripped the corpse to the bone they died. But here is a situation where the fire is never quenched and the worms are never satisfied.

And the Lord applies this dreadful picture to the torment of hell. The worm never dies. In other words in hell there will be something foul.

Endlessly gnawing at people, eating at them, devouring them, giving them no rest. Most commentators suggest that it may well refer to our consciences. We know a little bit of the pain of conscience in this life.

It is terrible. It can be terrible. It can drive people mad.

It can lead people to suicide. Many of the people who crowd into the psychiatrists offices for treatment, for therapy. All that is wrong with them is that they have a guilty conscience.

They don't need therapy. They need Christ. And it is the pain of conscience that is torturing them and tormenting them and disturbing them and making them unbalanced.

And yet in this life our conscience is comparatively hard. And certainly in the ungodly it is seared, it is insensitive. But it seems very probable that in hell the conscience of the damned will be sensitized, reawakened.

John Flavel writes, conscience which should have been the sinners curb on earth becomes the whip that will lash his soul in hell. He says that which was the seat and center of all guilt now becomes the seat and center of all torment. Young people, if you go to hell, how your conscience will reproach you.

You will think in hell, you will remember your godly father and how every day in your home he led your family in worship. And how he read the scriptures to you. And how he prayed with you and for you.

You will remember your father in hell. You will remember your mother. Your mother who sat you on her knee and told you about Jesus.

Your mother who loved you and prayed for you and would have given anything to see you become a Christian. Your father and mother who are praying for you now as they sit here in this room. You will remember that.

You will remember every time of family worship. Every prayer. Every plea.

Every appeal. Every example. Every church service.

Every time your pastor preached. Every word he said. Every conference you went to.

Every opportunity. Every time Christ drew near to you. Every time your conscience was troubled.

You will remember it. And you will remember it. And it will eat at you and torment you.

Why didn't I listen? It's my own fault I am here. I am to blame for being here. All my opportunities neglected, abused.

And your conscience will be an undying worm that will give you no rest or no peace. And then our Lord says there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. That is his most frequent expression for the experience of hell.

How often have you wept in your life? Really wept? Your heart breaking. In desolation. In utter wretched unhappiness.

With the grief inside you like a big growing weight that you feel is going to break your heart and burst you open. Till you can't bear it. Perhaps the time someone you loved died.

You wept. You wept bitterly. Inconsolably.

When you were betrayed. When you were misunderstood. When you were lonely.

Weeping. And the word which Christ uses is of an intense weeping. An inconsolable misery.

My friend Jesus says that in hell the tears will pour down your cheeks. Your whole body will be wracked with uncontrollable sobbing. You will be filled with bitter, bitter sorrow.

Guilty sorrow. Not like the sorrow of bereavement. Guilty sorrow.

Shameful sorrow. And all the tears that have ever been shed on this earth. Since Eden, if they could be gathered together, will not begin to compare with the tears of one individual in hell.

You will weep far more than all the world has ever wept. You will weep and weep forever. And not only will you weep, but there will be gnashing of teeth.

Some suggest that this refers to remorse. That may be the case. But it's often used in the scripture for anger.

We read in Job, God tears me in his wrath and hits me. He gnashes to me with his teeth. Stephen's accusers were cut to the heart and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

And so that phrase may refer to the damned grinding their teeth in rage. Helpless anger. Anger at the sins which wrecked their lives.

Anger at the devil and his demons. Anger at everyone else in hell. Anger at themselves for choosing such misery.

Anger at God, the righteous judge. Oh, I cannot express, I cannot express. Listen to the word of God.

Agonizing pain. We know little of pain in the modern world. We've got anesthetics and analgesics and the science of pain control has been brought to a fine art.

Who can imagine the pain, the torture of fire. The inner torment of a devouring worm. Enraged, bitter, sobbing.

That will be the condition of everyone tormented in the flame. The worm does not die. Weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Will you choose that? Is that what you want to end on? Is that what you want to experience? Agonizing pain. Could there be anything worse? Oh yes, there could. Because thirdly, there is an angry presence.

An angry presence. It's a common idea about hell as we've seen that hell is a place from which God is absent. C.S. Lewis is typical in his book *The Problem of Pain*.

Listen to what he says. Sin is man saying to God, go away and leave me alone. Hell is God saying to man, you may have your wish.

That's his view of hell. You may have your wish. I will go away and leave you alone.

Lewis could not be more wrong. He could not be more wrong. God is omnipresent.

He is present in all of his creation. And those who are tormented with fire and brimstone are tormented, we are told, in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. God is present in hell.

Now wait a minute you may say, did you not say a moment ago that hell means separation from God? Did you not quote those verses where God will say to the wicked, depart from me, leave me, far away from me, into outer darkness. How then can you say that on the one hand God is separated from those in hell and on the other hand that God is present with those in hell. Well the explanation is quite simple.

We think of separation in terms of distance. The bible however more accurately thinks of separation in terms of relationship. Not distance.

A man may go a thousand miles on a business trip. He is distant from his wife. But if he is a true husband he is not separated from her, is he? He thinks of her constantly.

He wishes he was with her. He looks forward to rejoining her. He prays for her and his family.

He calls her whenever he has opportunity. And many of us can testify that we feel closer to those we love and we appreciate them more and we value them more highly at times when there is an enforced geographical separation. We are distant but we are not separated.

On the other hand my wife and I know of a couple who are married and who live in the same home and they hate each other. Their relationship has corroded and become poisoned. And the presence of the other person is an unbearable irritation and annoyance.

They cannot stand each other. As we say they get on each other's nerves. Their proximity is torture to them.

They are relieved when the other person goes out of the house. They couldn't be closer physically. But there is a universe.

Now you see my friends that's what it means to be separated from God. Those in hell are separated from God's grace and from God's love and from God's mercy. And there is a great gulf between heaven and hell but God is very close.

Jonathan Edwards says that for everyone eternity will be spent in the immediate presence of God. I don't think I would have dared to say that. But when you think about it he is right.

Eternity for everyone will be spent in the immediate presence of God. But Edwards goes on to say that God will be the hell of one person and the heaven of another. Because in hell he will be present in his anger.

The wrath of God is coming on the sons of disobedience. Jesus delivers us from the wrath to come. And hell is the place where God pours out his wrath on the condemned.

Not just initially. Not just in casting them into hell. But forever personally and actively those in hell will see God in his holy spirit.

They will be condemned to gaze at him and will be unable to close their eyes. And the sight of him in his anger will be intolerably painful. I well remember as a boy those occasions when my father was angry with me.

And how unhappy our home was. And how wretched I felt. Miserable in my own heart and soul because something was wrong.

I couldn't meet his gaze. There was a tension. It was really unbearable until I had apologized.

Until I had received forgiveness and then been reconciled. I dreaded the thought of being in my father's angry presence. How much more dreadful to exist forever in the presence of an angry God.

What folly to say that God hates the sinners. But God loves the sinners. A scholar has done a study of 33 places in the Bible where God's hatred is referred to.

12 of them refer to God's hatred of sinners. 21 to God's hatred of sinners. The psalmist says the Lord abhors the bloodthirsty and deceitful man.

And that word abhors is linked with the Hebrew word for an abomination. The psalmist says the wicked God so hates. He hates them with every fibre of his being.

And he tells us that he will express this hatred with appalling fierceness. In Isaiah God says I have trodden them in my anger and trampled them in my fury. Their blood is sprinkled on my garment and I have stained all my robes.

In Ezekiel he speaks of idolatrous Judah. I will act in fury. My eye will not stare nor will I have pity.

Though they cry in my ears with a loud voice I will not hear. It is impossible to imagine anything more dreadful. The writer to the Hebrews tells us that it is a fearful thing.

A fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. He tells us that our God is a consuming fire. I think this is the fire of hell.

I think the fire of hell is the anger of a holy God. The burning righteous rage of God. In the prophet Nahum we are told that God's fury is poured out like fire.

A mighty release of wrath indescribable and unrestrained. People sometimes say we don't need to worry about hell. It is not literal fire.

In hell they will be saying if only it were literal fire. If only it were boiling oil or burning coal. If only it were something as easy and as light as that.

Here is the ultimate horror of hell. Not the absolute poverty. Not even the agonizing pain.

But the angry presence of God. The question is asked in Isaiah. Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burning? And yet it gets even worse.

It gets even worse. For there is an appalling prospect. It will never end.

It is everlasting fire. Everlasting punishment. Everlasting destruction.

It is the blackness of darkness forever. The smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever. They shall be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Jonathan Edwards says eternity is the sting of hell torment. We can't take it in. I have tried in these past weeks to get a handle on it.

It is too huge. Just as we cannot take in eternal life. Just as we cannot grasp what it means to be with God forever.

So we cannot understand eternal torment. Sometimes we spend a sleepless night. We know how dreadfully long that night is.

You look at your watch. Then you lie and lie for hours and hours. You look at your watch again and ten minutes have passed.

You think will it never end? Will mourning never come? We were singing from Psalm 130. Those who long for the morning. And when pain is added to sleeplessness.

How long those hours of darkness. Because I feel so inadequate at describing this. Please permit me to give you a lengthy quotation.

And it is a lengthy quotation from a far greater preacher. From Jonathan Edwards himself. From that great master preacher.

So mightily used. Please bear with me as I read these paragraphs. I will try to read them slowly.

Please try to take in what this mighty man of God is saying. As he preached his great sermon. The eternity of hell torment.

And as he preached people were converted. May Jonathan Edwards convert you again tonight. May he be God's instrument in God's hand.

So that he being dead may call to you from the glory and speak to you. Edwards says consider what it is to suffer extreme torment forever and ever. To suffer it day and night.

From one year to another. From one age to another. From one thousand ages to another.

Without any possibility of getting ease. Without any possibility of moving God to pity by your crying. Without any possibility of hiding from him.

Without any possibility of diverting your thoughts from your pain. Consider how dreadful your despair will be. In such torment.

To know assuredly that never never shall you be delivered. To have no hope. When you shall wish that you might be turned into nothing.

But shall have no hope. When you would rejoice if you might have any relief after millions of ages. But shall have no hope.

After you have worn out the age of the sun, moon and stars without rest or one minute's ease. You shall have no hope of ever being delivered. After you shall have worn out a thousand more such ages.

You shall have no hope. Still the same groans, the same shrieks, the same cries to be made by you. And that the smoke of your torment shall ascend up forever and ever.

The more the damned in hell think of the eternity of their torment. The more terrible will it appear to them. And alas they will not be able to keep it out of their minds.

Their tortures will not divert their attention from it but will fix their attention on it. How dreadful will eternity appear after they have been thinking on it for ages. And shall have such a long experience of their torment.

The damned in hell will have two infinities perpetually to amaze them. One an infinite God whose wrath they will bear and in whom they will behold their irreconcilable enemy. The other the infinite duration of their torment.

It will never end. It will go on and on and on. Forever and forever and forever.

And after millions of years you haven't begun. You haven't used up one second of hell. Sometimes people bluster and boast about hell.

John Stuart Mill said I will call no God good who sends people to hell. And if such a being can sentence me to hell, to hell I will go. Stupid braggart.

And even if at the gates of hell you were to summon up all your resolution and all your courage and all your strength and all your vigor and say I will bear it in half a second. All your courage would have melted away and you would be screaming, screaming for mercy. My friend that is what will happen to you.

You will be screaming I can't bear it. But you will have to bear it. You will have to bear it for all eternity.

It goes on and on forever. Supposing we knew that there was one individual in this room who was going to hell. And supposing we knew who that individual was.

Supposing there was one person sitting here tonight and we all of us knew that that person was on their way to hell. Wouldn't we be pitying? Wouldn't we be looking at them with tears running down our cheeks? Wouldn't we be praying for them? Just the thought of it, just to see them sitting there. A young person, a young fellow, a young girl.

And we would look at them and we would say they are going to hell. They are going to hell. But there may be many more than one.

There may be dozens here tonight who are going to hell. You may be going to hell. You are still unconverted.

You are rejecting Christ. What more can I say to you? You may say I don't believe in hell. You may be putting on a bold front as I speak to you now.

Well he's a preacher. That's what preachers have to say. Doesn't frighten me.

I don't believe in hell. Listen. Listen.

Listen to the voice of the damned who are now in hell. They are saying to you now, I didn't believe. I believe now.

Multitudes have gone to hell who didn't believe that hell existed. When they did realize it was too late. But for you it's not yet too late.

Or you may say I don't think I will end up in hell. A recent Gallup poll discovered that of the population of the United States, those surveyed, 78% thought that they had an excellent to good chance of going to heaven and 4% thought that they might go to hell. Most people think they won't go to hell.

But there are many now in hell who didn't think they would go to hell. They were sure they wouldn't go to hell. Jesus says that at the day of judgment there will be preachers and successful evangelists and miracle workers and leaders in the churches who will stand before him with a happy smile on their faces waiting to receive his well done.

And to their astonishment he will say, depart from me. I never knew you. Lord, Lord, we prophesied in your name.

We cast out devils. We did many wonderful works. We are not going to hell, but they do.

You may say that's plenty of time. I'm just young. Teenager perhaps.

Healthy and strong. How do you know it's plenty of time? How do you know you'll see another morning? Jonathan Edwards says the wicked are like people walking over a pit on a rotten covering. But in many places that covering is too weak to bear them.

They don't know where those places are. And at any moment, any of us could enter eternity. Unconverted person, the only thing that's keeping you alive tonight is the God who is very, very angry with you.

Very angry with you. He's just as angry with you now as with many people who are in hell. If you go to bed tonight unconverted, you're in the hands of an angry God.

What reason have you to think you'll wake up again? Why should he wake you up again? Some of you may be thinking, but my friends would laugh at me. Perhaps there's a little in-group of young people at this conference. And by nods and winks and words to each other, you have coalesced together as a group of young people who laugh at this a little bit.

You've been made to come by your parents. And you know that you're a little bit more sophisticated, a little bit cleverer. You're not into this.

Perhaps you've made plans even for some activity this evening or tomorrow evening. I don't know. And one of you tonight is thinking, but I need to get right with God.

I am guilty. I am going to hell. I need to turn to Christ.

Now you think, but what would the other fellows say? What would the girls say? They'd laugh at me. It would be awkward. It would be embarrassing.

Don't let other people send you to hell. Don't let other people send you to hell. For if you do, you'll meet up again in hell.

And you'll say to each other, damn you. Damn you for your example and your influence. And that night when Christ came near to me, I valued your opinion.

And I wanted to please you. And it's partly because of you that I'm in hell. And you'll hate each other for all eternity.

Don't let anybody else send you to hell. Some of you may say, well I'll believe if I have a Damascus road experience. If God comes down from heaven and stops me short and shakes me and converts me, I'll believe.

God's sovereign isn't he? He's got his elect. None of his elects will be lost. You can't believe unless God gives you the ability.

Very well then. If I'm one of God's elect, it's up to God to act and to turn me round. And until he does, I'm going to go on my merry way.

I'll wait for my Damascus road experience. I'll wait for that special moment. That's what the rich man wanted for his brothers.

Lots of Christians are very keen on special speakers. They say now if only we could get a special speaker at our church meeting. Well a pastor's alright, but get a special speaker.

Get somebody from Ireland. That'll do the trick. The rich man said, Lord, or to Abraham he said, if a special speaker could go to my brothers, they would believe.

A speaker not from Ireland or Great Britain, but a speaker from eternity. Supposing you could advertise that for a church meeting. Next week, special speaker from heaven.

What was Abraham's reply? They have Moses and the prophets. And if they don't listen to the word of God, if they don't believe the word of God, they'll not believe a special speaker. Neither will they believe.

You ask for a special experience. I offer Christ to you now. And he will have you if you will ask him.

What more? What more should God do for you? Right? To ask for something else. Perhaps you're saying, I love the good things of this life. I don't want to give them up.

Friends, you remember the dreadful, dreadful agony, almost a holy sarcasm of Abraham's words to the rich man in hell. Some remember that in your lifetime you received your good things. Oh, with what mockery did that phrase come upon the soul of that damned, tormented being.

My good things, my good things. Yes, I thought they were good things. I valued them as good things.

And Abraham says, what do you think of your good things now? Were they still good to him in hell? Did he still value them in hell? Was he still glad of his wealth and his luxury and his self-centeredness? No, no. It was the price for which he had sold his immortal soul. I plead with you, plead with you.

If you're not converted, please, please turn to Christ. What more can I say? What more can I say? God has shown you tonight what hell is like. I cannot believe you want to go to hell.

I cannot believe it. But if now, at this minute, you do not call on Christ to save you, you're saying, I choose to go to hell. God's speaking to you.

God's striving with you. God's warning you. But more than that, the Lord Jesus Christ pleading with you and calling you and commanding you.

And at this very moment, hundreds of prayers are arising to God's throne from this room for you. That now you will come. That you'll turn your back on the sin that will only damn you and ruin you forever.

And you'll come to the gracious Savior. Christ is here. Believe on Him.

We would do anything to see you converted. Anything we could, short of sin. Anything.

If our right hands would see you converted, we'd see them cut off. That's not hyperbole. Christians, wouldn't you agree with me? Don't we mean that? Don't we mean that? We would do anything, anything, anything to see you converted.

We do not want you to go to hell. Some of you parents here, how do they feel? At the thought of their children in hell. What would it mean to them? If you were to come to them tonight before bed and say, Dad, Mom, I've trusted Jesus and He's saved me.

It would be one of the greatest nights of their lives. Oh, please, please listen to the pleading of Jesus the Savior. He is so kind and so gracious.

And He'll receive you and He'll forgive you. He'll wash you clean and make you safe forever and ever. That you'll be holy and happy and look forward to an eternity of bliss and joy and glory in heaven.

Lord Jesus, please break the hold of the devil on people now in this room. We've been singing, come down in the day of your power and make them willing. Friends, let's pray.

Lord our God, you delight in mercy. You are greatly glorified in the salvation of sinners. When a sinner trusts in Christ, there is rejoicing in heaven.

Lord, we are absolutely at an end of ourselves. We have spoken ourselves empty. We are helpless.

We can do no more. But you are the almighty God. And even now in these moments you can enter hearts and make people truly sorry for their sins.

Truly repentant. And you can show them Christ. Lord, you can cause them to flee hell.

Dear Father in heaven, hear the prayers that have been offered in the past years and months and days and this very evening. And as this message has been delivered, oh Lord, hear our pleading. Hear our cry for those we love.

Lord, it would be worth more than all the earth to us to see them converted. Thank you for these dreadful warnings. Impress them, we pray, on the hearts of the lost.

But tonight, even at this moment, there may be those here who will cry, God, be merciful to me the sinner. Lord Jesus, have mercy on me. And grant, oh God, that they may not perish, but have everlasting life.

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